Karnataka Gandhi
Smaraka Nidhi
Gandhi Bhavan, Bengaluru

Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century

Building a Future of Peace, Justice, Fraternity and Sustainable Development

PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS OF INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

TO COMMEMORATE THE
75TH ANNIVERSARY OF GANDHI SMARAK NIDHI

Chief Editor
Prof. D. Jeevan Kumar

Editors
N.R. Vishukumar
Phaneesh Krishna

Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi
Gandhi Bhavan, Bengaluru

Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century

Building a Future of Peace, Justice, Fraternity and Sustainable Development

PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS OF INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

TO COMMEMORATE THE
75TH ANNIVERSARY OF GANDHI SMARAK NIDHI

Chief Editor
Prof. D. Jeevan Kumar

Editors
N.R. Vishukumar
Phaneesh Krishna

PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS OF INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR
TO COMMEMORATE THE
75TH ANNIVERSARY OF GANDHI SMARAK NIDHI

Year of Publication : 2025

Pages : x +166

Published by :

Secretary
Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi
Gandhi Bhavana, Kumara Park East
Bangalore - 560 001
080 22261967 / 9738605799
gandhibhavanabengaluru@gmail.com

Design & Printed by

Ujwal Enterprises
Bangalore - 560 060
Ph : 9886061766

C O N T E N T S

Foreword vi

Preface viii

Chief Editor's Note ix

Inaugural Session

1. 21ನೇ ಶತಮಾನಕ್ಕೆ ಮಹಾತ್ಮ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ 2
   ಶ್ರೀ. ಸಿದ್ಧರಾಮಯ್ಯ, ಮಾನ್ಯ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ
2. MAHATMA GANDHI FOR THE 21ST CENTURY 7
   Shri Siddaramaiah, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Karnataka
3. THE GANDHIAN TALISMAN IN GOVERNANCE 12
   Shri H.K. Patil, Hon'ble Minister for Law & Parliamentary Affairs, Legislation and Tourism, Govt. of Karnataka
4. STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY THE GANDHIAN WAY 14
   Shri Ramachandra Rahi, Chairman, Central Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, New Delhi

Keynote Session

5. UPHOLDING GANDHI'S LEGACY 20
   Shri Tushar Gandhi, Author & Great-Grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba Gandhi
6. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP 25
   Shri Kumar Prashant, Chairman, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi

Session 1: Gandhi, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

7. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND GANDHIAN RESPONSES 30
   Ban Ki-Moon, Former Secretary General of United Nations
8. SATYAGRAHA FOR THE 21st CENTURY 32
   Dr. John Challadurai, Professor and Head, Dept. of Gandhian Studies MGM University, Aurangabad
9. DISARMAMENT OF MINDS & HEARTS 38
   Dr. Mario Marazziti, Former Italian MP, Senior member of the Community of Sant' Egidio

Session 2: Gandhi for Sustainable and Equitable Development

10. GANDHI AS A LIVING METAPHOR 42
Mr. Prasanna Heggodu, Gandhian and Senior Theatre Person

11. TRANSFORMATION OF PERCEPTION INTO GANDHIAN CONSCIOUSNESS 45
Prof. D.M. Diwakar, Honorary Director, Development Research Institute, Jalsain, Bihar

12. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND VILLAGE SWARAJ 49
Mr. Uttam Kumar Sinha, Joint Director, National Gandhi Museum, Rajghat, New Delhi

13. SARVODAYA SHRAMADANA MOVEMENT IN SRI LANKA 63
Dr. Vinya S Ariyaratne, Honorary President, Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka

Session 3: Gandhi, Democracy and Disset

14. ADDRESSING CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO PLURALISM, SECULARISM & DEMOCRACY 68
Prof. Jagadishwar Chaturvedi, Author and Peace Promoter, New Delhi

15. GANDHI'S RELEVANCE TO DEMOCRACY 74
Justice H.N. Nagamohan Das, Former Judge, High Court of Karnataka

16. GANDHI, DEMOCRACY AND DISSENT 79
Dr. Siby Joseph, Director, Sri Jamnalal Bajaj Memorial Library and Research Centre for Gandhian Studies, Sevagram Ashram Pratishthan, Wardha

Session 4: Gandhian Values and the Revolutionary Power of Technology: Is a Synthesis Possible?

17. GANDHIAN TECHNOLOGY FOR A NEW CIVILIZATION 88
Mr. Sudheendra Kulkarni, Columnist and Author of 'The Music of the Spinning Wheel'

18. GANDHIAN TECHNOLOGY FOR THE 21st CENTURY 94
Mr. Sam Pitroda, Telecom Inventor and Information & Communications Technologist

19. CENTRALIZED Vs DECENTRALIZED INTERNET - LOCATING GANDHI IN THE DEBATE 96
Mr. Carl Malamud, Technologist and advocate of Public Domain –Public.Resource.Com

20. GANDHIAN TECHNOLOGIES FOR RURAL INDIA 100
Mr. Kollegala Sharma, Senior Science Communicator and Former Chief Scientist in CSIR-Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore

Session 5: Dialogue among Religions for Peace and Harmony

21. SPIRITUALITY, MORALITY AND HUMANITY AS THE CORNERSTONE OF RELIGIONS 104
Shri. Swami Nityasthananda ji, President of Ramakrishna Math, Bengaluru

22. MAHATMA GANDHI : A MODEL OF SARVA DHARMA MAITRI 107
Archbishop Rev Felix Machado, Archbishop of Vasai

23. FAITH, INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND COLLECTIVE ACTION AS THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A PEACEFUL SOCIETY 118
Dr. Kezevino Aram, President, Shanti Ashram, Coimbatore

24. GANDHIAN ACTIVITIES IN BANGLADESH 124
Shri Raha Naba Kumar, Director and CEO, Gandhi Ashram Trust, Noakhali, Bangladesh

Session 6: Gandhi, Globalization and Global Governance

25. GLOBALIZATION AND GANDHI 128
Mr. A. Annamalai, Director, National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi

26. GANDHI'S PASSIONS: A LIFE OF LIMITS AND LOCAL AUTONOMY 136
Prof. Chandan Gowda, Ramakrishna Hegde Chair
Professor of Decentralization and Development,
Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru

27. GANDHI DOES NOT NEED US;WE NEED HIM 139
P**rof. Akbar Ahmed,** Chair of Islamic Studies
at American University in Washington DC

28. NON-VIOLENCE IN CHINA 141
Prof. Quanyu Shang, Professor, School of Foreign Studies
South China Normal University

Valedictory Session

29. GANDHI SMARAK NIDHI : NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS 146
Dr. Sanjoy Singha, Secretary, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi

30. INCULCATION OF HUMAN VALUES 150
Hon'ble Justice N Santosh Hegde, Former Judge Supreme Court of India
and Former Lokayuktha of Karnataka State

31. INTROSPECTION AND THE WAY FORWARD 154
Shri H.K. Patil, Hon'ble Minister for Law & Parliamentary Affairs,
Legislation and Tourism, Govt. of Karnataka

32. ENDURING RELEVANCE OF MAHATMA GANDHI - HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR 158
Dr. Wooday P. Krishna, President, Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi

F O R E W O R D

Nadoja Wooday P. Krishna

Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest votary of peace, justice and universal brotherhood in the modern history of humankind. Although he was the preeminent leader of India's struggle for freedom from British colonial rule, he was truly a Vishwa Manav, a citizen of the world. He envisioned India's national liberation as an integral part of - indeed, as a catalyst for - the efforts to create a new and better world. He championed Truth *(Satya)* and Non-Violence *(Ahimsa)* as ethical principles of eternal and worldwide relevance. Among all the leaders of national liberation struggles in the last century, Gandhi stands apart for his unwavering commitment to the essential unity of humanity, transcending the barriers of nationality, race, religion, caste and class.

Gandhi died - he fell to the bullets of a religious extremist - nearly eight decades ago. But his thoughts and ideals, like those of other saints and social reformers belonging to other countries and cultures, are immortal.

At a time when India and the rest of the world are witnessing alarming levels of religious disharmony, he speaks to us in a voice that urges dialogue for mutual understanding, trust, respect and peaceful co-existence. At a time when the world is beset with steep inequalities both within and among nations, his concepts of *Sarvodaya* (Welfare of All) and *Antyodaya* (Welfare of the Last Man in Society) show us the path toward a more just and equitable world.

Gandhi's categorical denunciation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction as “sins against humanity” imparts strength to the worldwide campaign for peace and disarmament. He was one of the pioneers of Sustainable Development. His famous exhortation *“Mother Earth has enough to satisfy everyone's need, but*

not everyone's greed" - has become a mantra of the Green Movement. By describing women as the embodiments of love, care and compassion, he prophesied that the future evolution of the human species would be led by women.

Gandhi conducted pathbreaking experiments in education, healthcare, nutrition, sanitation, village industries and other areas related to human welfare. Even though times have changed, the essence of these experiments holds important lessons for our world.

There is a widespread misconception that he was opposed to modern science and technology. This is not true. He had profound faith, bordering on romance, in the power of scientific knowledge and technological advancements to solve the problems of humanity and aid the search for the truth behind the mysteries of the universe. *"Everything can be turned into a science or a romance,"* he said. His warning was directed at the unethical and exploitative use of science and technology. Since the 21st century is going to shaped by revolutionary technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, Genetics and others, there is surely a need to understand both their possibilities and perils.

There is another widespread misconception about Gandhi that, as an advocate of *Swadeshi* (national self-reliance), he disfavoured international cooperation. This, too, is not true. He wanted a balance between localization and globalization. *"Interdependence (among nations) is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as (national) self-sufficiency,"* he said.

Gandhi was a democrat to the core. While being firm in his basic convictions, he was never dogmatic. He was always open to learning from new situations and from others' points of view. He had intrinsic respect for his opponents, and conducted debates and discussions with them in a manner completely free from malice and egotism. At a time when space for dissent and healthy debate is shrinking even in democracies around the world, this Gandhian tradition needs to be revived.

It is obvious that all the above-mentioned thoughts and concerns resonate with the problems and needs of humanity in the 21st century. Therefore, we felt that there is a need to debate and discuss them by bringing together leading thought and action leaders from India and abroad. This is what the International Seminar attempted to do.

We are delighted to place before readers the outcome of an intellectually stimulating international seminar on ***"Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century - Building A Future of Peace, Justice, Fraternity and Sustainable Development"***. We are sure that you will benefit from the contributions of the Gandhians and thought leaders who responded to our invitation to share their invaluable insights and perspectives at the seminar.

Nadoja Wooday P. Krishna
President, Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi

P R E F A C E

N.R. Vishukumar

In an era marked by unprecedented challenges, from rising inequality and social injustice to climate change and threats to global peace, the world is in dire need of a moral compass. Mahatma Gandhi, one of the most iconic figures of the 20th century, offers a powerful and enduring vision for a better future. This book, ***"Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century: Building a Future of Peace, Justice, Fraternity and Sustainable Development,"*** explores the relevance of Gandhi's ideas and ideals in addressing the complex problems of our time.

Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, simple living, and self-sufficiency continues to inspire movements and individuals around the world. His commitment to social justice, equality, and human rights remains a beacon of hope for marginalized communities and oppressed peoples. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, Gandhi's emphasis on the interconnectedness of human well-being, environmental sustainability, and economic equity offers a compelling framework for building a more just and peaceful world.

This book brings together scholars, activists, and practitioners from diverse backgrounds who reflect on the significance of Gandhi's legacy in the 21st century. Through a range of perspectives and insights, the contributors explore the ways in which Gandhi's ideas can inform and inspire our responses to the major challenges of our time, from climate change and sustainable development to social justice and human rights.

We hope that this book will serve as a catalyst for a renewed engagement with Gandhi's ideas and ideals, and inspire a new generation of leaders, activists, and change-makers to build a future that is more just, peaceful, and sustainable for all.

N. R. Vishukumar
Working President, Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi

Chief Editor's Note

D. Jeevan Kumar

The Editorial Board is pleased to present this carefully curated document containing the presentations made by distinguished participants of the international seminar on ***"Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century - Building A Future of Peace, Justice, Fraternity and Sustainable Development".***

The organization of the event, as well as the curation of this document, is a testament of collective endeavour. Thanks are due to the entire Governing Body of Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, led by the indefatigable **Nadoja Dr. Wooday P. Krishna**, and very ably backed by the Second-in-Command **Shri N. R. Vishukumar** for guiding and steering this enormous venture. For all the intellectual inputs received, and for the connections made with the international scholars, we owe a debt of gratitude to **Dr. Sudheendra Kulkarni.**

For invaluable inputs offered at every meeting of the Organizing Committee of the seminar, we are indebted to **Dr. G.B. Shivaraj, Shri M.C. Narendra, Prof. S.G. Siddaramaiah, Prof. G.S. Jayadeva, Shri H.B. Dinesh, Shri Umesh Baligar, Dr. Abida Begum, Smt. Savita Nagabhushan and Dr. Chittaiah Pujar.**

Dr. G.B. Shivaraj deserves a separate line of appreciation for his unique anchoring of the Inaugural and Valedictory sessions of the seminar, and for overseeing, with meticulous detail, the logistics pertaining to the distinguished speakers. We place on record our deep appreciation of his tireless efforts.

The collective efforts, dedication, and passion of the Organizing Committee are a testament to the spirit of *Ubuntu* - recognizing that great things are possible only with the coming together of like-minded people, inspired by a vision, a dream, a hope – of a better future for humankind, inspired by the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi. The success of the International Seminar is a testimony to the power of collective strength, dedication,

commitment, creativity, and resilience.

The Organizing Committee would like to acknowledge and express its deepest gratitude to the entire team which worked tirelessly for the success of the international seminar. For introducing the distinguished speakers at the Technical Sessions and for anchoring the respective sessions, we are grateful to ***Ms. Sharada Ganesh, Ms. Jahanavi Pai and Mr. Omshivaprakash.***

Invaluable support was rendered, behind the scenes, by the staff of Gandhi Bhavan, by NSS officers and volunteers, by the Servants of Knowledge team, and by staff of the Kumara Krupa Guest House and the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation. To each and every one of this team, the Editorial Board offers its sincere appreciation for tireless work, a willingness to collaborate, and a commitment to our shared goals.

This document would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of **Shri Phaneesh Krishna**. His technical skill and knowledge contributed immensely, both to the success of the seminar, and in the curation of this document. Scholars and writers know how difficult the task of transcription is. In fact, it is much easier to write something than to transcribe what someone else has said. Transcription calls for a set of skills that involve, apart from a command of the language, enormous patience, dedication to the job at hand, single-mindedness of purpose, and a reservoir of energy. Shri Phaneesh Krishna has all these qualities. He has measured up to the occasion admirably. Words are inadequate to express our gratitude to him.

A final word of gratitude to all those who have been an integral part of this journey. May our collaboration continue to inspire and uplift, and may our shared efforts contribute to the greater good of all — in the true spirit of Sarvodaya.

Prof. D. Jeevan Kumar

INAUGURAL SESSION

21ನೇ ಶತಮಾನಕ್ಕೆ ಮಹಾತ್ಮ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ

ಶ್ರೀ. ಸಿದ್ಧರಾಮಯ್ಯ, ಮಾನ್ಯ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

ಕಾನೂನು ಮತ್ತು ಸಂಸದೀಯ ವ್ಯವಹಾರ, ಶಾಸನ ರಚನೆಗಳ ಹಾಗೂ ಪ್ರವಾಸೋದ್ಯಮ ಸಚಿವರಾದ ಶ್ರೀ ಹೆಚ್.ಕೆ ಪಾಟೀಲ್‌ರವರೆ, ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷತೆ ವಹಿಸಿರುವ ನವದೆಹಲಿ ಗಾಂಧಿ ಸ್ಮಾರಕ ನಿಧಿಯ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರಾದ ಶ್ರೀ ರಾಮಚಂದ್ರ ರಾಹಿರವರೆ, ನವದೆಹಲಿ ಗಾಂಧಿ ಸ್ಮಾರಕ ನಿಧಿಯ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿಗಳಾದ ಡಾ. ಸಂಜೋಯ್ ಸಿಂಗ್‌ರವರೆ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಿಕ ಗಾಂಧಿ ಸ್ಮಾರಕ ನಿಧಿಯ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರಾದ ಡಾ. ವೂಡೇ ಪಿ ಕೃಷ್ಣರವರೆ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಗಾಂಧಿ ಸ್ಮಾರಕ ನಿಧಿಯ ಗೌರವ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿಗಳಾದ ಶ್ರೀ ಎಂ.ಸಿ ನರೇಂದ್ರರವರೆ, ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದಲ್ಲಿ ಉಪಸ್ಥಿತರಿರುವ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಗಣ್ಯರೆ, ಮಾಧ್ಯಮ ಸ್ನೇಹಿತರೆ, ಮಹಿಳೆಯರೆ ಮತ್ತು ಮಹನೀಯರೆ,

ನವದೆಹಲಿಯ ಗಾಂಧಿ ಸ್ಮಾರಕ ನಿಧಿ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಗೊಂಡ 75ನೇ ವರ್ಷದ ಸಂಸ್ಮರಣೆಯ ಅಂಗವಾಗಿ ಹಮ್ಮಿಕೊಂಡಿರುವ '21 ನೇ ಶತಮಾನಕ್ಕೆ ಮಹಾತ್ಮ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ' ಎನ್ನುವ ಹೆಸರಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಆಯೋಜಿಸಿರುವ ಅಂತರರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಿಚಾರ ಸಂಕಿರಣವನ್ನು ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಸಂತೋಷದಿಂದ ಉದ್ಘಾಟಿಸಿದ್ದೇನೆ.ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಹುಟ್ಟಿದ್ದು 19ನೇ ಶತಮಾನದ ಕಡೆಯಲ್ಲಿ [ಅಕ್ಟೋಬರ್–2–1869] 19ನೇ ಶತಮಾನದ ಕಡೆಯ ದಶಕಗಳು ಇಂದು ನಾವು ಯಾವುದನ್ನು ಆಧುನಿಕತೆ ಎಂದು ಕರೆಯುತ್ತೇವೊ ಅಂಥ ದಿನಗಳ ಆರಂಭ ಮಾತ್ರ ಆಗಿತ್ತು. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು 19 ಮತ್ತು 20ನೆ ಶತಮಾನಕ್ಕೆ ಎಷ್ಟು ಅವಶ್ಯಕವಾಗಿದ್ದರು ಎಂಬುದು ನಮಗೆಲ್ಲ ಗೊತ್ತಿದ್ದರೂ 21ನೇ ಶತಮಾನಕ್ಕೆ ಕಳೆದ ಶತಮಾನಗಳಿಗಿಂತ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಅಗತ್ಯವಾಗಿದ್ದಾರೆ ಎಂಬುದು ಇತ್ತೀಚಿನ ವಿದ್ಯಮಾನಗಳನ್ನು ನೋಡಿದರೆ ಅರ್ಥವಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ನೀವು ಇಡೀ ಜಗತ್ತಿನ ವಿಷಯವನ್ನು ಗಮನದಲ್ಲಿಟ್ಟುಕೊಂಡು ಈ ವಿಷಯವನ್ನು ನೀಡಿದ್ದೀರಿ. ಇದನ್ನು ಅಂತರರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಿಚಾರ ಸಂಕಿರಣ ಮಾಡಿದ್ದೀರಿ. ಇದು ಒಳ್ಳೆಯ ವಿಚಾರವೆ. ಗಾಂಧಿ ಭವನದ ಪದಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು ಒಳ್ಳೆಯ ಕೆಲಸ ಮಾಡಿದ್ದೀರಿ. 21ನೆ ಶತಮಾನಕ್ಕೆ ಬೇಕಾದ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಎಂಬ ವಿಷಯದ ಕುರಿತು ಮಾತನಾಡಲು ನನಗಂತೂ ಸಂತೋಷವಿದೆ.

ಜಗತ್ತಿನ ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಕುಲ ಇಂದು ಅಳಿವು ಉಳಿವಿನ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಯನ್ನು ಎದುರಿಸುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಇತ್ತೀಚೆಗೆ ನಿಧನ ಹೊಂದಿದ ಜಗತ್ತಿನ ಸಾರ್ವಕಾಲಿಕ ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠ ವಿಜ್ಞಾನಿಯೆಂದು ಕರೆಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತಿದ್ದ ಸ್ಟೀಫನ್ ಹಾಕಿಂಗ್ ಎಂಬ ವಿಜ್ಞಾನಿಯು ಮನುಷ್ಯರ ಪಾಲಿಗೆ 21ನೆ ಶತಮಾನ ಕಡೆಯ ಶತಮಾನ ಎಂದು ಹೇಳಿದ್ದಾನೆ. ಆತ ಅದಕ್ಕೆ ಕಾರಣಗಳನ್ನೂ ಕೊಟ್ಟಿದ್ದಾನೆ. ಸ್ಟೀಫನ್ ಹಾಕಿಂಗ್ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಈ ಭೂಮಿ ಮೇಲಿನಿಂದ ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಅಳಿದು ಹೋಗಲು ಮುಖ್ಯ ಕಾರಣ; ಜಗತ್ತಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಮನುಷ್ಯರ ನಡುವೆ ಅಸಹನೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಹೊಂದಾಣಿಕೆ, ಸೌಹಾರ್ದ ಎಂಬ ಅಮೂಲ್ಯ ಬಾವನೆಗಳು ವೇಗವಾಗಿ ಮರೆಯಾಗುತ್ತಿವೆ. ಮನುಷ್ಯನ ಸ್ವಯಂಕೃತ ಅಪರಾಧಗಳ ಕಾರಣದಿಂದಾಗಿ ಜಾಗತಿಕ ತಾಪಮಾನ ಏರಿಕೆಯಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಭೂಮಿ ವೇಗವಾಗಿ ಬಿಸಿಯಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಬರ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರವಾಹಗಳು ಹಿಂದಿಂದೆಯೆ ಬಂದು

ಅಪ್ಪಳಿಸುತ್ತಿವೆ. ಜಾಗತಿಕ ಭಯೋತ್ಪಾದನೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಜಗತ್ತು ನಾಯಕತ್ವ ಕಳೆದುಕೊಂಡಿದೆ. ಪ್ರಮುಖ ದೇಶಗಳ ನಾಯಕರುಗಳು ಸರ್ವಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳಾಗುತ್ತಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಇವರು ಸದಾ ಅಶಾಂತಿ, ಹಿಂಸೆ, ಯುದ್ಧಗಳಿಗೆ ಕರೆ ಕೊಡುತ್ತಿರುತ್ತಾರೆ. ತಮ್ಮ ದೇಶಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ದಮನಿತರು ಹಾಗೂ ಅಲ್ಪಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರ ಮೇಲೆ ಬಹುಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರನ್ನು ಎತ್ತಿ ಕಟ್ಟುತ್ತಿರುತ್ತಾರೆ. ಆರ್ಟಿಫಿಷಿಯಲ್ ಇಂಟೆಲಿಜೆನ್ಸ್ ಎಂಬ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯು ಮನುಷ್ಯರನ್ನು ನಿರುಪಯೋಗಿ ಜೀವಿಗಳನ್ನಾಗಿ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಯಂತ್ರಗಳ ಗುಲಾಮನಾಗುತ್ತಿದ್ದಾನೆ. ಮನುಷ್ಯರ ದುರಾಸೆಯ ಕಾರಣಕ್ಕೆ ಮುಂದಿನ ಎಷ್ಟೋ ತಲೆಮಾರುಗಳಿಗೆ ಬೇಕಾದ ಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲಗಳು ವೇಗವಾಗಿ ಖಾಲಿಯಾಗುತ್ತಿವೆ.

ಈ 5 ಕಾರಣಗಳನ್ನು ಸ್ಟೀಫನ್ ಹಾಕಿಂಗ್ ಕೊಟ್ಟಿದ್ದಾನೆ. ಆತನ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಎಂಬ ಜೀವಿಯು ಉಳಿಯಬೇಕಾದರೆ ಬೇರೆ ಗ್ರಹಗಳನ್ನು ಹುಡುಕಿಕೊಳ್ಳಬೇಕು ಅಥವಾ ಇರುವ ಭೂಮಿಯನ್ನು ವೇಗವಾಗಿ ಮೊದಲಿನ ಸ್ಥಿತಿಗೆ ತರಬೇಕು ಎಂಬುದಾಗಿದೆ. ಸ್ಟೀಫನ್ ಹಾಕಿಂಗ್ 'Brief answers to the Big Questions' ಎಂಬ ಅಮೂಲ್ಯ ಪುಸ್ತಕದಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಎಲ್ಲ ವಿಚಾರಗಳನ್ನು ಚರ್ಚಿಸಿದ್ದಾನೆ.

ಹಾಕಿಂಗನ ಮೊದಲ ಆತಂಕಕ್ಕೆ;

ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ನಿರಂತರವಾಗಿ ಪ್ರತಿಪಾದಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದ ಅನೇಕ ವಿಚಾರಗಳು ಇಂದು ಅಂತರರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ನಿಯಮಗಳಾಗಿವೆ. ಅವುಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಮುಖ್ಯವಾಗಿ ಅನ್ಯ ಧರ್ಮ–ಪಂಥಗಳ ಜನರ ಆಚಾರ–ವಿಚಾರ, ನಂಬಿಕೆಗಳ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಗೌರವ, ಅಸಕ್ತಿ ತೋರುವುದು. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ಈ ವಿಚಾರವನ್ನು ತಮ್ಮ ಜೀವಿತಾವಧಿ–ಯುದ್ದಕ್ಕೂ ಜೀವನ್ಮರಣದಂತೆ ಪಾಲಿಸಿದ್ದರು. ಎಲ್ಲರನ್ನೂ ಒಳಗೊಂಡು ಬಾಳುವ, ಯಾರನ್ನೂ ಹೊರಗಿಡದೆ ಇವ ನಮ್ಮವ ಎಂದು ಪರಿಭಾವಿಸಬೇಕು ಎಂದು ಪ್ರತಿಪಾದಿಸಿದ ಬುದ್ಧ, ಬಸವಣ್ಣ ಮುಂತಾದವರ ಆದರ್ಶಗಳನ್ನು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಬಾಯಿ ಮಾತಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಹೇಳದೆ ಜೀವನದಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ಅಳವಡಿಸಿಕೊಂಡರು.

ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ಬದುಕಿದ್ದ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿಯೆ ಮೊದಲ ಮತ್ತು ಎರಡನೆಯ ಮಹಾಯುದ್ಧಗಳು ನಡೆದವು. ಈ ಯುದ್ದದಲ್ಲಿ ಕೋಟ್ಯಾಂತರ ಸಾವು ನೋವುಗಳು ಸಂಭವಿಸಿದವು. ಪ್ರಪಂಚದ ಉತ್ತರ ಭಾಗದವರು ದಕ್ಷಿಣ ಬಾಗವನ್ನು ವಸಾಹತುವಾದದ ಹೆಸರಲ್ಲಿ ಲೂಟಿ ಹೊಡೆದರು. ಜಗತ್ತು ಕಂಡು ಕೇಳರಿಯದ ಮಟ್ಟಿಗೆ ರೋಗ ರುಜಿನಗಳಿಗೆ ತುತ್ತಾಯಿತು. ಇವುಗಳೆಲ್ಲದರ ಜೊತೆಗೆ ಹೊಸದಾಗಿಯೆಂಬಂತೆ ಅಸಂಖ್ಯಾತ ಕೋಮು ಸಂಘರ್ಷಗಳು ನಡೆದವು.

ಇದನ್ನೆಲ್ಲ ಗಮನಿಸಿದ್ದ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ಎಲ್ಲದಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಮುಖ್ಯವಾಗಿ ಕೋಮು ಸಾಮರಸ್ಯ ಬಹಳ ಮುಖ್ಯ ಎಂದು ಹೇಳಿದ್ದರು. ಕೋಮು ವಿಚಾರದಲ್ಲಿ ಇಂದು ಇಡೀ ಜಗತ್ತೆ ಕೊತ ಕೊತ ಕುದಿಯುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಹಿಂದೂ–ಮುಸ್ಲಿಂ, ಬೌದ್ಧ– ಮುಸ್ಲಿಂ [ಶ್ರೀಲಂಕಾ ಮುಂತಾದ ಕಡೆ], ಕೈಸ್ತ– ಮುಸ್ಲಿಂ ಯಹೂದಿ–ಮುಸ್ಲಿಂ ಮುಂತಾಗಿ ಜಗತ್ತು ಹಲವು ಬಿರುಕುಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸಿಲುಕಿಕೊಂಡಿದೆ. ಅನೇಕ ಕಡೆ ಯುದ್ದಗಳು ನಡೆಯುತ್ತಿವೆ.

ಪರಸ್ಪರ ಹೊಂದಾಣಿಕೆ, ತಿಳಿವಳಿಕೆ, ಸಹನೆ, ಔದಾರ್ಯತೆಗಳು ನೆಲೆಸದಿದ್ದರೆ ಒಂದು ದಿನ ಮನುಷ್ಯರು, ಬಾಷೆ, ಬುಡಕಟ್ಟು, ಜಾತಿ, ಧರ್ಮ ಮುಂತಾದ ವಿಷಯಗಳಿಗಾಗಿಯೆ ಹೊಡೆದಾಡಿಕೊಂಡು ನಾಶವಾಗುವ ಬೀತಿ ಎದುರಾಗಿದೆ. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ಪದೇ ಪದೇ ಕೋಮು ಸೌಹಾರ್ದದ ಕುರಿತು ಮಾತನಾಡಿದ್ದರು. ಆಚರಣೆಯಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ಅವುಗಳನ್ನು ಅಳವಡಿಸಿಕೊಂಡಿದ್ದರು. ಅವರ ಪ್ರಯೋಗಗಳು 21ನೆ ಶತಮಾನದಲ್ಲಿ ಹಿಂದೆಂದಿಗಿಂತಲೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತತೆ ಪಡೆದುಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತಿವೆ. ಕೋಮು ಸೌಹಾರ್ದ ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗಬೇಕಾದರೆ ಆಯಾ ದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿನ ಯಾವುದೇ ರೀತಿಯ ಅಲ್ಪ ಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರ ಹಿತಾಸಕ್ತಿಯನ್ನು, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿ, ಬಾಷೆ, ಆಸ್ತಿ–ಪಾಸ್ತಿಗಳನ್ನು ರಕ್ಷಿಸಬೇಕು. ಈ ವಿಚಾರ ಕೂಡ ಇಂದು ಅಂತರರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಸನ್ನದ್ದಾಗಿದೆ.

ಭಾರತದಲ್ಲಿ ಜಾತಿಯು ಸಮಗ್ರ ರೂಪದ ಶಾಪವಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಎರಡನೆಯ ಹಂತದಲ್ಲಿ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರಿಗೆ ಮನವರಿಕೆ–ಯಾಯಿತು. ಜಾತಿಯು ಕೆಲವರಿಗೆ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಸಂಪತ್ತು. ಆ ಸಂಪತ್ತನ್ನು ಬಳಸಿಕೊಂಡೆ ಕೆಲವರು ರಾಜಕೀಯ– ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಯಜಮಾನಿಕೆಯನ್ನು ಗಳಿಸಿಕೂಂಡಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಯಾರಿಗೆ ಇದು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗುವುದಿಲ್ಲವೊ ಅವರು ಶಾಶ್ವತವಾಗಿ ಗುಲಾಮಗಿರಿ–ಯಲ್ಲಿಯೆ ಇರಬೇಕಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಹಾಗಾಗಿ ಜನರಲ್ಲಿ ಜಾತಿ ಪ್ರಜ್ಞೆಯನ್ನು ಹೋಗಲಾಡಿಸಲು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ನಿರಂತರ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನ ಮಾಡಿದರು. ಜಾತಿ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯಂತೆಯೆ ಬ್ರಿಟೀಷರು ಬಣ್ಣದ ಆಧಾರದ ಮೇಲೆ ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠ–ಕನಿಷ್ಠ, ಆಳುವವನು–ಆಳಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳವವನು ಎಂಬ ತತ್ವವನ್ನು ಮಾಡಿ ಭಾರತೀಯರನ್ನು, ಏಷ್ಯನ್ನರನ್ನು, ಆಫ್ರಿಕನ್ನರನ್ನು ಆಳಿದರು. ಹಾಗಾಗಿ ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠ– ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಎಂಬ ತಾರತಮ್ಯ ಮನೋಭಾವಗಳು ಮೊದಲು ತೊಲಗಬೇಕು ಎಂದು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಹೇಳಿದ್ದರು. ಈಗಲೂ ಜಾತಿ– ವರ್ಣ, ವರ್ಗ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳು ಮೊದಲಿಗಿಂತಲೂ ತೀವ್ರಗೊಂಡಿವೆ. ಆದ್ದರಿಂದ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಮೊದಲಿಗಿಂತಲೂ ಈಗ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಪಸ್ತುತವಾಗಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಬಹುಶಃ ಈ ಹಿನ್ನೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿಯೆ ಐನ್‌ಸ್ಟೈನ್ ಎಂಬ ವಿಜ್ಞಾನಿ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಪ್ರತಿಪಾದಿಸುತ್ತಿರುವ Inclusiveness and Non Violence ಎಂಬ ವಿಚಾರಗಳು ಮಾತ್ರ ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಕುಲಕ್ಕೆ ಆಶಾವಾದಿಯಾಗಿವೆ. ಎಂದು ಹೇಳಿದ್ದಾನೆ.

ಜಾಗತಿಕ ಪರಿಸರ ಬಿಕ್ಕಟ್ಟುಗಳು ಎಂಬ ಹಾಕಿಂಗನ ಎರಡನೆಯ ಆತಂಕ ಸರಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.

ಹಾಕಿಂಗನ ಮಾತುಗಳನ್ನು ಓದಿದ ಮೇಲೆ ನನಗೆ ನಿಜಕ್ಕೂ ಮುಂದಿನ ದಿನಗಳ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಆತಂಕವಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಇಡೀ ಜಗತ್ತಿನ ಪ್ರಕೃತಿ ಭೀಕರವಾಗಿ ದಣಿದಿದೆ. ಪ್ರಕೃತಿಯ ಮೇಲಿನ ಹಲ್ಲೆಯಿಂದಾಗಿ ಅದು ಕೋಪಗೊಂಡಿದೆ. ನಮ್ಮ ಪಶ್ಚಿಮ ಘಟ್ಟಗಳ ಮೇಲೆ ವಿಪರೀತ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ನಡೆಸಿದ ಕಾರಣಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಇಡೀ ಬೆಟ್ಟ ಗುಡ್ಡಗಳೆ ಕರಗಿ ನೀರಿನಂತೆ ಹರಿಯುತ್ತಿವೆ. ಕೇರಳದಲ್ಲಿ, ನಮ್ಮ ಶಿರೂರಿನಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆದ ಗುಡ್ಡ ಕುಸಿತ ಪ್ರಕರಣಗಳು ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಸಾಕ್ಷಿ. ನಮ್ಮ ರಾಜಕಾರಣಿಗಳು ಈಗಲೂ ಓಟಿನ ರಾಜಕಾರಣಕ್ಕೆ ಕ್ಷುಲ್ಲಕ ರಾಜಕಾರಣ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಾ ಕೂತಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಸಿದ್ದರಾಮಯ್ಯ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಯಾದರೆ ಮಳೆ ಬರುವುದಿಲ್ಲ ಎಂದು ಜನರಲ್ಲಿ ಹುಸಿ ನಂಬಿಕೆಯನ್ನು ಬಿತ್ತಲು ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ. ರಾಜಕಾರಣಿಗಳು ತಮ್ಮ ಅಧಿಕಾರ ದಾಹಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಜನರನ್ನು ಶಾಶ್ವತ ಮೌಢ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಬೀಳಿಸಲು ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ. ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಮಾಧ್ಯಮಗಳೂ ತುಪ್ಪ ಸುರಿಯುತ್ತವೆ.

ಆದರೆ ಆಗುತ್ತಿರುವುದೇನು? ಪೆಸಿಫಿಕ್ ಸಾಗರದಲ್ಲಿ ಉಂಟಾಗುವ ಉಷ್ಣ ಮತ್ತು ಶೀತ ಪ್ರವಾಹಗಳು– [ಎಲ್ ನಿನೊ ಮತ್ತು ಲಾನಿನೊ] ಜಗತ್ತಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಮಳೆ, ಪ್ರವಾಹ, ಬರಗಳಿಗೆ ಕಾರಣವಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಜಗತ್ತಿನ ಮನುಷ್ಯರು ತಮ್ಮ ಸ್ವಾರ್ಥ, ದುರಾಸೆಗಳ ಕಾರಣಕ್ಕಾಗಿ, ಐಷಾರಾಮಿ ಜೀವನಗಳಿಗಾಗಿ ಕಾಡು ಕಡಿದು, ಬೆಟ್ಟ ಬಗೆದು, ರಸ್ತೆ ಮಾಡಿ, ಡೀಸೆಲ್, ಪೆಟ್ರೋಲ್ ಉರಿಸಿ ಕಾರ್ಬನ್ ಡೈ ಆಕ್ಸೈಡ್ ಮುಂತಾದ ವಿಷಕಾರಿ ಹೊಗೆ ಬಿಟ್ಟು ಭೂಮಿಯನ್ನು ಮರುಭೂಮಿ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದೇವೆ. ಇದರಿಂದ ಭೂಮಿ ವೇಗವಾಗಿ ಬಿಸಿಯಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಇದು ಎಲ್–ನಿನೊ, ಲಾ–ನಿನೊಗಳಿಗೆ ಕಾರಣವಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಮನುಷ್ಯನ ಆರೋಗ್ಯಕಾರಕ ಬದುಕಿಗೆ ಪ್ರಕೃತಿಯ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಬಹಳ ಮುಖ್ಯ ಎಂಬ ಕಾರಣದಿಂದಾಗಿ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು " ಈ ಭೂಮಿಯು ಎಲ್ಲರ ಅಗತ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಪೂರೈಸುತ್ತದೆಯೇ ಹೊರತು ದುರಾಸೆಗಳನ್ನಲ್ಲ" ಎಂದು ಹೇಳಿದ್ದರು. 21 ನೇ ಶತಮಾನದ ಈ ದಿನಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಈ ಮಾತು ಹಿಂದಿಗಿಂತಲೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಹಾಕಿಂಗನ 4ನೆ ಆತಂಕ; ಮನುಷ್ಯನನ್ನು ಭೂಮಿ ಮೇಲಿನಿಂದ ಅಳಿಸಿ ಹಾಕಲು ನಿಂತಿರುವ ಆರ್ಟಿಫಿಷಿಯಲ್ ಇಂಟೆಲಿಜೆನ್ಸ್.

ಜಗತ್ತು ಇಂದು ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕವಾಗಿ ಅನೇಕ ಆವಿಷ್ಕಾರಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಿದೆ. ಮನುಷ್ಯರು ಮಾಡುವ ಕೆಲಸಗಳನ್ನು ರೊಬೋಟುಗಳೆಂಬ ಯಂತ್ರಗಳೆ ಮಾಡಲು ಪ್ರಾರಂಭಿಸಿವೆ. ಆರ್ಟಿಪಿಷಿಯಲ್ ಇಂಟೆಲಿಜೆನ್ಸ್ [ಇದನ್ನು ಕೃತಕ ಬುದ್ಧಿಮತ್ತೆ ಎಂದೂ ಕರೆಯಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ] ಎಂಬುದು ಮನುಷ್ಯರನ್ನು ನಿಯಂತ್ರಿಸುವ ದಿನಗಳು ಬಂದಿವೆ. ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಯಂತ್ರಗಳ ಗುಲಾಮನಾಗುತ್ತಿದ್ದಾನೆ. ಮನುಷ್ಯರ ಘನತೆ–ಗೌರವಗಳು ಮಣ್ಣು ಪಾಲಾಗುತ್ತಿವೆ. ಕಾರ್ಪೊರೇಟ್ ಬಂಡವಾಳಿಗ ಕುಳಗಳು ಯಂತ್ರಗಳನ್ನು ಆಧರಿಸಿದ ಉತ್ಪಾದನಾ ವಿಧಾನವನ್ನು ಹೆಚ್ಚೆಚ್ಚು ಬಳಸಲಾರಂಭಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಇದರಿಂದಾಗಿ ವ್ಯಾಪಕ ನಿರುದ್ಯೋಗ, ಅಶಾಂತಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಕಾರಣವಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಇದರಿಂದ ಜಗತ್ತು ಡಿಜಿಟಲ್ ಡಿಕ್ಟೇಟರ್‌ಶಿಪ್ ಕಡೆಗೆ ನಡೆಯುತ್ತಿದೆ ಎಂಬುದು ಎಲ್ಲ ಮಾನವತಾವಾದಿಗಳ ಆತಂಕ.

ಜಗತ್ತಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಉಳ್ಳವರು ಮತ್ತು ಇಲ್ಲದವರ ನಡುವೆ ಅಂತರ ತೀವ್ರವಾಗಿ ಹೆಚ್ಚುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಅಸಮಾನತೆಯ ವಿಷಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾರತ ಮತ್ತು ಜಗತ್ತಿನ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿ ಬಿನ್ನವಾಗಿಲ್ಲ. ಹಲವು ಅಧ್ಯಯನಗಳ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಶೇ.1ರಷ್ಟು ಜನರ ಬಳಿ ಶೇ. 50 ರಷ್ಟು ಸಂಪತ್ತು ಶೇಖರವಾಗಿದೆ. ಶೇ.10 ರಷ್ಟು ಜನರ ಬಳಿ ಶೇ.85 ಸಂಪತ್ತು ಶೇಖರಣೆಗೊಂಡಿದೆ. ಯಂತ್ರ ನಾಗರೀಕತೆಯ ಕಾರಣಕ್ಕೆ ಬಡತನ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಅಸಮಾನತೆ, ಅಶಾಂತಿಗಳು ಹೆಚ್ಚುತ್ತವೆ ಎಂಬುದನ್ನು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಮನಗಂಡಿದ್ದರು. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಆತಂಕ ಇಂದು ಸಂಪೂರ್ಣವಾಗಿ ನಿಜವಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಸಾಬೀತಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ.

ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ 1909 ರ ವೇಳೆಗೆ ಬರೆದ 'ಹಿಂದ್ ಸ್ವರಾಜ್' ಎಂಬ ಕೃತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಘನತೆಯಿಂದ ಬಾಳಬೇಕಾದರೆ ಮಾಡಬೇಕಾದುದೇನು? ಎಂದು ವಿವರವಾಗಿ ಚರ್ಚಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಅದರಲ್ಲಿ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಯಂತ್ರಗಳು ಮನುಷ್ಯನ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣ–ದಲ್ಲಿರಬೇಕು. ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾದಷ್ಟು ಮನುಷ್ಯನ ಕೈ ಕಾಲುಗಳಿಗೆ ಶ್ರಮ ಕೊಡುವ ಸರಳ ಯಂತ್ರಗಳಾದ ನೇಗಿಲು, ಚರಕ, ರಾಟೆ ಮುಂತಾದವುಗಳು ಮಾತ್ರ ಇರಲಿ ಎಂದಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಆದರೆ ಬೃಹತ್ ನಾಗರಿಕತೆಯು ಇಂದು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯಂಥವರ ವಿಚಾರಗಳನ್ನು ಸಂಪೂರ್ಣವಾಗಿ ಕಬಳಿಸಿಬಿಟ್ಟಿದೆ.

ಅನೇಕ ಸಾರಿ ನಾನು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಯಾಕೆ ಈ ಮಾತುಗಳನ್ನು ಹೇಳಿರಬಹುದು ಎಂದು ಯೋಚಿಸುತ್ತೇನೆ. ಮುಂಬೈ, ಲಂಡನ್, ಡರ್ಬಾನ್ ಮುಂತಾದ ನಗರಗಳನ್ನು ನೋಡಿದ್ದ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರಿಗೆ ನಗರೀಕರಣದ ವಿಕೃತಿಗಳೆಲ್ಲವೂ ಅರ್ಥವಾಗಿದ್ದವು.

ಉದಾಹರಣೆಗೆ ಅಂದಿನ ಭಾರತದ ಮೊದಲ ರೈಲು ಪ್ರಾರಂಭವಾಗಿದ್ದು 1853 ರಲ್ಲಿ. ಮೊದಲ ಕಾರ್ಖಾನೆ [ಆಧುನಿಕ ಹತ್ತಿ ಗಿರಣಿ] ಪ್ರಾರಂಭವಾಗಿದ್ದು 1854 ರಲ್ಲಿ, ಮುಂಬೈನಲ್ಲಿ. ದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಮೊದಲ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭವಾಗಿದ್ದು 1905 ರಲ್ಲಿ. ಮೊದಲ ಬಸ್ ಸಂಚಾರ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭವಾಗಿದ್ದು 1926 ರಲ್ಲಿ. ಮೊದಲ ವಿಮಾನ 1911 ರಲ್ಲಿ. ವಿದ್ಯುತ್, ರೈಲು, ಬಸ್ಸು, ವಿಮಾನಗಳು ಬಂದ ಮೇಲೆ ದೇಶವನ್ನು ವೇಗವಾಗಿ ಲೂಟಿ ಹೊಡೆದು ಸಾಗಿಸಲು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಯಿತು. ಇದರ ಜೊತೆಗೆ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರಿಗೆ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕತೆಯ ಪ್ರಗತಿ ಮತ್ತು ನಗರೀಕರಣಗಳ ಕುರಿತು ಹಲವು ರೀತಿಯ ತಕರಾರುಗಳಿದ್ದವು. ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಮಾನಸಿಕವಾಗಿ ಬದಲಾವಣೆ ಹೊಂದದೆ, ಆಧುನಿಕನಾಗದೆ ಭೌತಿಕವಾಗಿ ಮಾತ್ರ ಬದಲಾವಣೆಯಾದರೆ ಅದರ ವಿಕೃತಿಗಳನ್ನು ಅನುಭವಿಸಬೇಕಾಗುತ್ತದೆ ಎಂದು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ನಂಬಿದ್ದರು. ಆಧುನೀಕರಣ ಮತ್ತು ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೀಕರಣಗಳು ಮನುಷ್ಯನ ಚೈತನ್ಯವನ್ನು ಹಾಳು ಮಾಡುತ್ತವೆ ಎಂದು ಅವರು ನಂಬಿದ್ದರು.

ಭಾರತದಲ್ಲಿ ಬಲಪಂಥೀಯರೆಂದು ಕರೆಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತಿರುವ ಬಿಜೆಪಿ, ಆರೆಸ್ಸೆಸ್, ಬಜರಂಗ ದಳ, ವಿಶ್ವ ಹಿಂದೂ ಪರಿಷತ್ ಮುಂತಾದ ಸಂಘಟನೆಗಳು, ಜರ್ಮನಿಯ ನಾಜಿ, ಇಟಲಿಯ ಫ್ಯಾಸಿಸ್ಟ್ ಸಂಘಟನೆಗಳಂತೆಯೆ ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಕುಲಕ್ಕೆ ಅಪಾಯಕಾರಿಯಾಗಿವೆ. ಇದೇ ಮನಸ್ಥಿತಿಯು ಜನರೆ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರನ್ನು ಕೊಲೆ ಮಾಡಿದರು. ಜಗತ್ತಿನಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಎಲ್ಲ ಧಾರ್ಮಿಕ ಸಂಘಟನೆಗಳು, ಧರ್ಮದ ಆಧಾರದ ಮೇಲೆ ನಡೆಯುತ್ತಿರುವ ರಾಜಕೀಯ ಪಕ್ಷಗಳು ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಕುಲಕ್ಕೆ ಕಂಟಕಗಳಾಗಿವೆ. ಈ ಬಲಪಂಥೀಯವೆನ್ನಿಸಿಕೊಂಡಿರುವ ಸಂಘಟನೆಗಳು ಧರ್ಮಾತೀತವಾಗಿವೆ. ಇಸ್ಲಾಂನಲ್ಲೂ ಇವೆ, ಬೌದ್ಧರಲ್ಲೂ ಇವೆ, ಕ್ರಿಶ್ಚಿಯನ್ನರಲ್ಲೂ ಇವೆ. ಇವು ಆಯಾ ದೇಶದ ಅಲ್ಪ ಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರ ವಿರುದ್ಧ, ಅಂಚಿನ ಸಮುದಾಯಗಳ ವಿರುದ್ಧ, ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಇರುತ್ತವೆ. ಮಹಿಳೆಯರು ಮಕ್ಕಳನ್ನು ಹೆರುವ ಯಂತ್ರಗಳು ಎಂದೇ ಭಾವಿಸುತ್ತವೆ. ಹಾಗಾಗಿ ಇವುಗಳನ್ನು ತಿರಸ್ಕರಿಸದಿದ್ದರೆ ಮನುಷ್ಯ ಕುಲಕ್ಕೆ ಅಪಾಯಕಾರಿಯಾಗುತ್ತವೆ. ಈಗಾಗಲೆ ಅಂಥ ಹಾದಿಯಲ್ಲಿವೆ.

ದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಬಿಜೆಪಿ ಮತ್ತು ಅದರ ಅಂಗಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯನ್ನು ಕೊಂದದ್ದು ಸರಿ ಎಂಬ ವಾದವನ್ನು ಆಗಾಗ ಮಂಡಿಸುತ್ತಿವೆ. ಗೋಡ್ಸೆಯನ್ನು ಆರಾಧಿಸುತ್ತಿವೆ. ಬಾರತದಲ್ಲಿ

ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಕೊಲೆಯ ಮೂಲಕ ವಿಶ್ವದ ಮನುಷ್ಯರ ವಿನಾಶಕ್ಕೆ ಬರೆದ ಮುನ್ನುಡಿ ಎಂದು ನಾನು ಭಾವಿಸಿದ್ದೇನೆ. ಮಹಾತ್ಮ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಬೋಧನೆಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ತತ್ವಗಳು ಕಾಲ ಮತ್ತು ಗಡಿಗಳನ್ನು ಮೀರಿದ್ದು. ನಾಗರಿಕ ಹಕ್ಕುಗಳು, ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ನ್ಯಾಯ ಮತ್ತು ಸುಸ್ಥಿರ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಗಾಗಿ ಜಗತ್ತಿನಾದ್ಯಂತ ನಡೆದ ಚಳವಳಿಗಳ ಮೇಲೆ ಪ್ರಭಾವ ಬೀರಿವೆ. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ದೃಷ್ಟಿಕೋನ ಭಾರತದ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ಹೋರಾಟಕ್ಕೆ ಸೀಮಿತ–ವಾಗಿರಲಿಲ್ಲ; ಇದು ಸತ್ಯ, ಅಹಿಂಸೆ ಮತ್ತು ಕರುಣೆಯ ತತ್ವಗಳ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಾನವೀಯತೆಯನ್ನು ಮೇಲಕ್ಕೆತ್ತುವ ಸಾರ್ವತ್ರಿಕ ದೃಷ್ಟಿಕೋನವಾಗಿದೆ. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ತತ್ವಗಳು 21ನೇ ಶತಮಾನದಲ್ಲೂ ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತವಾಗಿವೆ. ಪ್ರಪಂಚವು ಹೆಚ್ಚುತ್ತಿರುವ ಅಸಮಾನತೆ, ಪರಿಸರದ ಅವನತಿ, ಸಂಘರ್ಷಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಬೆಳೆಯುತ್ತಿರುವ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಪರಕೀಯತೆಯಂತಹ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳನ್ನು ಎದುರಿಸುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಇಂತಹ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಶಾಂತಿ, ನ್ಯಾಯ, ಬ್ರಾತೃತ್ವ ಮತ್ತು ಸುಸ್ಥಿರ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಆದರ್ಶಗಳು ಭರವಸೆಯ ದಾರಿದೀಪವನ್ನು ನೀಡುತ್ತವೆ.

ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಪ್ರಜಾಪ್ರಭುತ್ವದ ಕಲ್ಪನೆಯು ಅಹಿಂಸೆಯ ಮೇಲಿನ ಅವರ ನಂಬಿಕೆಯೊಂದಿಗೆ ಆಳವಾಗಿ ಬೆಸೆದುಕೊಂಡಿತ್ತು. ಪ್ರಜಾಪ್ರಭುತ್ವದ ಶಕ್ತಿಯು ಜನರ ಇಚ್ಛೆಯನ್ನು ಎತ್ತಿಹಿಡಿಯುವ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ಅಹಿಂಸಾತ್ಮಕ ಮಾರ್ಗಗಳ ಮೂಲಕ ನಿಜವಾದ ಪ್ರಜಾಸತ್ತಾತ್ಮಕ ಆಡಳಿತವನ್ನು ಸಾಧಿಸಬಹುದು ಎಂದು ಅವರು ಬಲವಾಗಿ ನಂಬಿದ್ದರು. ನಾವು ಇಂದು ಪ್ರಜಾಪ್ರಭುತ್ವದ ಆಶಯವನ್ನೇ ಬುಡಮೇಲು ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿರುವ ಪ್ರವೃತ್ತಿಯನ್ನು ನೋಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದೇವೆ. ಬಿಜೆಪಿ ನೇತೃತ್ವದ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸರ್ಕಾರವು ಪ್ರಜಾಸತ್ತಾತ್ತಕ ಜನಾದೇಶವನ್ನು ಕಡೆಗಣಿಸಿ, ಬಹುಮತ ಹೊಂದಿರುವ ಚುನಾಯಿತ ಸರ್ಕಾರಗಳನ್ನು ಅಸ್ಥಿರಗೊಳಿಸುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಜನರ ಶಕ್ತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಜಾಸತ್ತಾತ್ತಕ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳ ಪಾವಿತ್ರ್ಯವನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿಪಾದಿಸಿದ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು, ಇಂತಹ ಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ನಿಸ್ಸಂದೇಹವಾಗಿ ವಿರೋಧಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು.

ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ಯಾವುದೇ ಸಮಾಜವನ್ನು ಅದು ಅತ್ಯಂತ ದುರ್ಬಲ ವರ್ಗದವರನ್ನು ಹಾಗೂ ಮಹಿಳೆಯರನ್ನು ಹೇಗೆ ನಡೆಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತದೆ ಎಂಬುದರಿಂದ ಅಳೆಯಬಹುದು ಎಂದು ನಂಬಿದ್ದರು. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ನ್ಯಾಯದ ಅನ್ವೇಷಣೆಯು ಇಂದು ಸಮಾಜದಲ್ಲಿ ಆಳವಾಗಿ ಬೇರೂರಿರುವ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಅಸಮಾನತೆ, ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಅಸಮಾನತೆ ಮತ್ತು ತಾರತಮ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಹೋಗಲಾಡಿಸಬೇಕು ಎಂಬುದಾಗಿತ್ತು. ದುರ್ಬಲರನ್ನು ಮೇಲಕ್ಕೆತ್ತದಿದ್ದರೆ ಸಮಾಜದ ಪ್ರಗತಿ ಅರ್ಥಹೀನ ಎಂಬುದು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಸರ್ವೋದಯದ ಪರಿಕಲ್ಪನೆ. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರದು ಕೇವಲ ರಾಜಕೀಯ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ಯದ ಕಲ್ಪನೆಯಾಗಿರಲಿಲ್ಲ; ಬದಲಾಗಿ, ಪ್ರತಿಯೊಬ್ಬ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯ, ವಿಶೇಷವಾಗಿ ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಮತ್ತು ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆಯಲ್ಲಿತ್ತು. ಅವರು ಕನಸು ಕಂಡಿದ್ದ – ಮಧ್ಯರಾತ್ರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮಹಿಳೆ ನಿರ್ಭಯವಾಗಿ ನಡೆಯಬಹುದಾದ ನಿಜವಾದ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ಯವನ್ನು. ದೇಶ ಇಂದು ಎಷ್ಟೇ ಸಾಧನೆ ಮಾಡಿದ್ದರೂ, ಮಹಿಳೆಯರು ಇಂದಿಗೂ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳನ್ನು ಎದುರಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಕ್ರೂರ ಅತ್ಯಾಚಾರಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ಮೇಲಿನ ದೌರ್ಜನ್ಯದ ಪ್ರಕರಣಗಳು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಪರಿಕಲ್ಪನೆಯ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ಯವನ್ನು ತಲುಪುವಲ್ಲಿ ನಾವು ಇನ್ನೂ ದೂರ ಸಾಗಬೇಕಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂಬುದನ್ನು ಹೇಳುತ್ತವೆ. ನಮ್ಮ ತಾಯಂದಿರು, ಸಹೋದರಿಯರು ಮತ್ತು ಹೆಣ್ಣುಮಕ್ಕಳು ಭಯಭೀತರಾಗಿ ಬದುಕುವವರೆಗೂ ನಾವು ಇನ್ನೂ ನಿಜವಾಗಿಯೂ ಸ್ವತಂತ್ರರಾಗುವುದಿಲ್ಲ. ಇಂದಿನ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ, ಲಿಂಗ ಸಮಾನತೆಯ ಹೋರಾಟವನ್ನು ಮುಂದುವರಿಸಲು, ಮಹಿಳೆಯರು ಘನತೆ, ಭದ್ರತೆ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ಯದಿಂದ ಬದುಕುವ ಸಮಾಜವನ್ನು ರಚಿಸಲು ನಮಗೆ ಸವಾಲು ಹಾಕುತ್ತಾರೆ.

ಮಣಿಪುರದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆದ ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ಮೇಲಿನ ಭೀಕರ ಹಿಂಸಾಚಾರದ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ ಕೇಂದ್ರದಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಬಿಜಿಪಿ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಮೌನವನ್ನು ಗಮನಿಸಬೇಕಾಗಿದೆ. ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ಮೇಲಿನ ದೌರ್ಜನ್ಯದಂತಹ ಗಂಬೀರ ಅಪರಾಧಗಳ ಆರೋಪ ಹೊತ್ತಿರುವ ಬ್ರಿಜ್‌ಭೂಷಣ್ ಅವರಂತಹ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಅವರ ಮೌನ ಬೆಂಬಲವನ್ನು ಗಮನಿಸಬೇಕಾಗಿದೆ. ನಿರ್ಧಾಕ್ಷಿಣ್ಯ ಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ತೆಗೆದುಕೊಳ್ಳದೆ, ಬಿಜೆಪಿಯು ಅಪಾಯಕಾರಿ ಸಂದೇಶವನ್ನು ರವಾನಿಸುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ಮೇಲಿನ ದೌರ್ಜನ್ಯವನ್ನು ಸಹಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವ ಮತ್ತು ಶಾಶ್ವತವಾಗಿ ಬೆಳೆಸುವ ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯನ್ನು ಪ್ರೋತ್ಸಾಹಿಸುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ಇಂತಹ ಉದಾಸೀನ–ತೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಟುವಾಗಿ ವಿರೋಧಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು ಮತ್ತು ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ಹಕ್ಕುಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಸುರಕ್ಷತೆಗಾಗಿ ನಿಲ್ಲುವಂತೆ ನಮ್ಮನ್ನು ಒತ್ತಾಯಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ಯಾವುದೇ ರೀತಿಯ ಹಿಂಸಾಚಾರವನ್ನು ಖಂಡಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ ಮತ್ತು ಹೊಣೆಗಾರರನ್ನು ಹೊಣೆಗಾರರನ್ನಾಗಿ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಾರೆ.

ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಭ್ರಾತೃತ್ವದ ಕಲ್ಪನೆಯು ವಸುಧೈವ ಕುಟುಂಬಕಂ – 'ಜಗತ್ತು ಒಂದೇ ಕುಟುಂಬ' ಎಂಬುದರಲ್ಲಿ ಬೇರೂರಿದೆ. ನಾವೆಲ್ಲರೂ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ನಮ್ಮ ಭವಿಷ್ಯವು ಬೆಸೆದುಕೊಂಡಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಅವರು ನಂಬಿದ್ದರು. ಇಂದಿನ ಧ್ರುವೀಕರಣದ ಜಗತ್ತು ಮತ್ತು ಒಡೆದು ಆಳುವ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು ಒಂದು ಸಮುದಾಯವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತೊಂದು ಸಮುದಾಯದ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಎತ್ತಿಕಟ್ಟಲು ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಿಸುತ್ತಿವೆ. ಇದಕ್ಕ ಪ್ರತಿಯಾಗಿ, ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ 'ಬ್ರಾತೃತ್ವದ ಸಂದೇಶವು ನಮ್ಮ ಶಕ್ತಿಯು ನಮ್ಮ ಏಕತೆಯಲ್ಲಿದೆ, ಪರಸ್ಪರ ಗೌರವ ಮತ್ತು ತಿಳುವಳಿಕೆಯ ಮೂಲಕ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯತೆಯನ್ನು ಅಳವಡಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳವ ನಮ್ಮ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಹೇಳುತ್ತದೆ. ಆದಾಗ್ಯೂ, ಇಂದು ಪ್ರಪಂಚದಾದ್ಯಂತ ಕೋಮುವಾದವು ಉತ್ತುಂಗದಲ್ಲಿದೆ, ನಮ್ಮ ಸಮಾಜಗಳ ಮೂಲಕ್ಕೆ ಆತಂಕಕಾರಿಯಾಗಿದೆ. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ 21ನೇ ಶತಮಾನದ ಅವತಾರವು ನಿಸ್ಸಂದೇಹವಾಗಿ ಇವುಗಳನ್ನು ಸರಿಪಡಿಸಲು ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಧರ್ಮ, ಜಾತಿ ಅಥವಾ ಪಂಥಗಳನ್ನು ಮೀರಿ ಎಲ್ಲರನ್ನೂ ಸಮಾನತೆ ಮತ್ತು ನ್ಯಾಯದೊಂದಿಗೆ ಪರಿಗಣಿಸುವ ಜಗತ್ತನ್ನು ಬಯಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಪ್ರತಿಯೊಬ್ಬ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯನ್ನು ಮೌಲ್ಯಯುತವಾಗಿ ಗೌರವಿಸಿದಾಗ ಮಾತ್ರ ಶಾಂತಿಯನ್ನು ಸಾಧಿಸಬಹುದು ಎಂದು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ನಮಗೆ ನೆನಪಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ.

"ಸುಸ್ಥಿರ ಅಬಿವೃದ್ದಿ" ಎಂಬ ಪದವು ಜಾಗತಿಕವಾಗಿ ಸುದ್ದಿಯಾಗುವ ಬಹಳ ಹಿಂದೆಯೇ, ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ಪ್ರಕೃತಿಯೊಂದಿಗೆ ಸಾಮರಸ್ಯದ ಜೀವನ ವಿಧಾನಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಪ್ರತಿಪಾದಿಸಿದರು. ಅನಿಯಂತ್ರಿತ ಕೈಗಾರೀಕರಣದ ಅಪಾಯಗಳ ವಿರುದ್ದ ಅವರು ಎಚ್ಚರಿಕೆ ನೀಡಿದರು. ಇದು ಜನರು ಮತ್ತು ಪರಿಸರಕ್ಕೆ ತೊಂದರೆಯನ್ನುಂಟು ಮಾಡುತ್ತವೆ ಎಂದು ಅವರು ನಂಬಿದ್ದರು. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಗ್ರಾಮ ಸ್ವರಾಜ್ ಪರಿಕಲ್ಪನೆಯು ಸ್ಥಳೀಯ ಸಮುದಾಯಗಳು ತಮ್ಮ ಪರಿಸರದೊಂದಿಗೆ ಹೇಗೆ ಸಾಮರಸ್ಯದಿಂದ ಬದುಕುತ್ತವೆ, ಹೇಗೆ ಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲಗಳನ್ನು ವಿವೇಚನೆಯಿಂದ ಬಳಸುತ್ತವೆ ಮತ್ತು ಹೇಗೆ ಭವಿಷ್ಯದ ಅಗತ್ಯಗಳಿಗೆ ಧಕ್ಕೆಯಾಗದಂತೆ ನೋಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತವೆ ಎಂಬುದಾಗಿತ್ತು. ಇಂದು ಹವಾಮಾನ ಬದಲಾವಣೆಯ ಆತಂಕವನ್ನು ಎದುರಿಸುತ್ತಿರುವಾಗ, ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಸುಸ್ಥಿರತೆಯ ತತ್ವಗಳು ಇಂದಿಗೂ ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತವಾಗಿವೆ. ನಾವು ನಮ್ಮ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಮಾದರಿಗಳನ್ನು ಮರುರೂಪಿಸಬೇಕಾಗಿದೆ. ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆಯ ನಿರಂತರ ಅನ್ವೇಷಣೆಯಿಂದ ಕೊಂಚ ದೂರ ಸರಿಯುವುದು ಹಾಗೂ ಜನರ ಯೋಗಕ್ಷೇಮಕ್ಕೆ ಆದ್ಯತೆ ನೀಡುವ ಮಾದರಿಯತ್ತ ನಾವು ಸಾಗಬೇಕಾಗಿದೆ. ನಮ್ಮ ಸರ್ಕಾರವು ರಾಜ್ಯದ ನೈಸರ್ಗಿಕ ಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲಗಳನ್ನು ಗೌರವಿಸುವ ಮತ್ತು ನಮ್ಮ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಉತ್ತಮ ಭವಿಷ್ಯವನ್ನು ಖಾತ್ರಿಪಡಿಸುವ, ಸಮಾನ ಮತ್ತು ಸುಸ್ಥಿರ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಮಾರ್ಗವನ್ನು ಅನುಸರಿಸಲು ಬದ್ದವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದಲ್ಲಿ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಆದರ್ಶಗಳನ್ನು ಒಳಗೊಂಡಿರುವ ಸಮಾಜವನ್ನು ರಚಿಸುವ ನಿಟ್ಟಿನಲ್ಲಿ ನಾವು ಕೆಲಸ ಮಾಡುತ್ತೇವೆ. ಶಾಂತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಸೌಹಾರ್ದತೆಯನ್ನು ಬೆಳೆಸಲು, ಎಲ್ಲರಿಗೂ ನ್ಯಾಯವನ್ನು ಖಾತ್ರಿಪಡಿಸಲು, ಮಹಿಳೆಯರಿಗೆ ಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಖಾತರಿಪಡಿಸಲು, ಭ್ರಾತೃತ್ವದ ಮನೋಭಾವವನ್ನು ನಿರ್ಮಿಸಲು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಸ್ಥಿರ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯನ್ನು ಉತ್ತೇಜಿಸಲು ನಾವು ಬದ್ಧರಾಗಿದ್ದೇವೆ. ನಾವು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಜೀವನ ಮತ್ತು ಕೆಲಸದಿಂದ ಸ್ಫೂರ್ತಿಯನ್ನು ಪಡೆಯೋಣ ಮತ್ತು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರು ಹೆಮ್ಮೆಪಡುವಂತಹ ಸತ್ಯ, ಅಹಿಂಸೆ ಮತ್ತು ಸಹಾನುಭೂತಿಯ ಮೌಲ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಹೊಂದಿದ ಜಗತ್ತನ್ನು ನಿರ್ಮಿಸಲು ಶ್ರಮಿಸೋಣ. ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ಯ ಹೋರಾಟದ ಜೊತೆ ಜೊತೆಗೇ, ಸಮಾಜದಲ್ಲಿನ ಅಸಮಾನತೆ, ಅಸ್ಪೃಶ್ಯತೆ ಮೊದಲಾದ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಪಿಡುಗುಗಳ ವಿರುದ್ದವೂ ಅವರ ಹೋರಾಟ ಸಾಗಿತ್ತು.

1924ರ ಭಾರತೀಯ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಕಾಂಗ್ರೆಸ್‌ನ ಚಾರಿತ್ರಿಕ ಬೆಳಗಾವಿ ಅಧಿವೇಶನ ನಡೆದು ನೂರು ವರ್ಷಗಳಾಗಿವೆ. ಬೆಳಗಾವಿ ಅಧಿವೇಶನ ಮಹಾತ್ಮ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆದ ಅಧಿವೇಶನದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಾಡಿದ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷೀಯ ಬಾಷಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಧಾರ್ಮಿಕ ಸಾಮರಸ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು ವಿವಿಧ ಭಾಷೆಗಳನ್ನಾಡುವ ಜನರ ನಡುವಣ ಸೌಹಾರ್ದಯುತ ಸಂಬಂಧಕ್ಕೆ ಒತ್ತು ನೀಡಿ ಮಾತನಾಡಿದ್ದರು. ಸಮಾಜದ ದಮನಿತ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಅಭ್ಯುದಯಕ್ಕೆ ಕೈಗೊಳ್ಳಬೇಕಿರುವ ಕ್ರಮಗಳ ಬಗ್ಗೆಯೂ ಪ್ರಸ್ತಾಪಿಸಿದ್ದರು.

ಭಾರತೀಯ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಕಾಂಗ್ರೆಸ್‌ನ ಬೆಳಗಾವಿ ಅಧಿವೇಶನದ ಶತಮಾನೋತ್ಸವವನ್ನು ಸ್ಮರಣೀಯವಾಗಿ ಮತ್ತು ಅರ್ಥ–ಪೂರ್ಣವಾಗಿ ಆಚರಿಸಲು ಈ ವರ್ಷ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ವತಿಯಿಂದ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ರೀತಿಯ ಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ಕೈಗೊಳ್ಳಲಾಗುವುದು. ದೇಶ ವಿದೇಶಗಳ ಗಣ್ಯರು, ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿವಾದಿಗಳು, ಚಿಂತಕರು ಎಲ್ಲರೂ ಒಟ್ಟಾಗಿ ಸೇರಿ ಚರ್ಚೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಸಂವಾದ ನಡೆಸಲು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಸ್ಮಾರಕ ನಿಧಿ ಉತ್ತಮ ವೇದಿಕೆಯನ್ನು ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಿಕೊಟ್ಟಿದೆ. ಇಂತಹ ವಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ವಿಚಾರ ಸಂಕಿರಣವನ್ನು ಏರ್ಪಡಿಸಿರುವ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಸ್ಮಾರಕ ನಿಧಿಯ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಪದಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳಿಗೂ ನನ್ನ ಅಭಿನಂದನೆಗಳು. ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಮೂಡಿ ಬರುವ ಉತ್ತಮ ವಿಚಾರಗಳು ಎಲ್ಲರಿಗೂ ತಲುಪಲಿ. ವಿಶೇಷವಾಗಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಗಾಂಧೀಜೀಯವರ ತತ್ವಗಳು ಅರ್ಥವಾಗಲಿ ಎಂದು ನಾನು ಆಶಿಸುತ್ತೇನೆ. ನಮ್ಮೊಳಗಿನ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯನ್ನು ಬೆಳಗಿಸುವ ಸಂದರ್ಭ ಇದಾಗಲಿ ಎಂದು ತಿಳಿಸಿ ನನ್ನ ಮಾತುಗಳನ್ನು ಮುಗಿಸುತ್ತೇನೆ.

MAHATMA GANDHI FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Shri Siddaramaiah, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Karnataka

Honorable Shri H.K. Patil, Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Legislative Affairs, and Tourism, Shri Ramachandra Rahi, President of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi, presiding over the program, Dr. Sanjoy Singh, Secretary of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi, Dr. Wooday P. Krishna, President of the Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, and Shri M.C. Narendra, Honorary Secretary of the Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. Esteemed dignitaries, media friends, women, and respected attendees present at this event, it is my honor to address you all today.

It is with great pleasure that I have inaugurated the International Symposium on 'Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century' organized as part of the commemoration of the 75th year of the establishment of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi in New Delhi. Gandhiji was born in the late 19th century [October 2, 1869] and the last decades of the 19th century were just the beginning of what we today call modernity.

We all know how necessary Gandhiji was for the 19th and 20th centuries. But if we look at recent events, we understand that he is more necessary for the 21st century than for the previous centuries. You have given this subject keeping in mind the entire world. You have made it an international symposium. This is a good idea.

The office bearers of Gandhi Bhavan have done a good job. I am also happy to speak on the topic of Gandhiji for the 21st century. The human race in the world is facing the problem of extinction today. The scientist Stephen Hawking, who was called the greatest scientist of all time in the world and who passed away recently, said that the 21st century is the last century for humans. He also gave reasons for it. According to Stephen Hawking, the main

reasons for the extinction of humans from this earth is as follows:

The world is experiencing increasing intolerance between humans. The precious feelings of harmony and friendship are rapidly disappearing. Due to man's self-inflicted crimes, global warming is increasing. The earth is heating up rapidly. Droughts and floods are coming back and destroying it. Global terrorism is increasing. The world has lost leadership. The leaders of major countries are becoming dictators. They are always calling for unrest, violence, and wars. They are inciting the majority over the oppressed and minorities in their countries.

The technological research called Artificial Intelligence is making humans useless beings. Man is becoming a slave to machines. Due to human greed, the resources needed for many generations to come are rapidly running out. These reasons have been given by Stephen Hawking. According to him, if a creature like man wants to survive, he must either find other planets or restore the existing earth to its former state as soon as possible. Stephen Hawking has discussed all these issues in his invaluable book 'Brief Answers to the Big Questions'.

Many of the ideas that Gandhiji consistently advocated have become international norms today. The main one is respect for the practices and beliefs of people of other religions and sects. Gandhiji followed this principle throughout his life. Gandhiji did not just say it verbally, but also implemented the ideals of Buddha, Basavanna, etc., who advocated living with everyone and considering everyone as ours, without excluding anyone.

The First and Second World Wars took place during Gandhiji's lifetime. Millions of people died in these wars. The people of the northern part of the world plundered the southern part of the world in the name of colonialism. The world was afflicted with diseases that the world had never seen before. Along with all this, countless communal conflicts took place. Gandhiji, who had observed all this, had said that communal harmony is most important above all. Today, the whole world is boiling over communal issues. The world is fragmented due to Hindu-Muslim, Buddhist-Muslim [in places like Sri Lanka], Christian-Muslim, Jewish-Muslim and such conflicts. Wars are going on in many places. If mutual understanding, tolerance, and generosity do not prevail, one day people will perish over issues like language, tribe, caste, religion, etc.

Gandhiji had repeatedly spoken about communal harmony. He had also adopted them in his conduct. His experiments are gaining more relevance in the 21st century than ever before. For communal harmony to be possible, the interests of any minority in a given country, their culture, language, and origins, must be protected. This issue is also international today.

In the second stage, Gandhiji was convinced that caste was a comprehensive curse in India. Caste is a social asset for some. By using that asset, some have gained political and economic dominance. Those who cannot do this will have to remain in slavery forever. Therefore, Gandhiji made continuous efforts to eliminate caste consciousness among the people. Just like the caste system, the British ruled Indians, Asians, and Africans on the basis of colour, based on the strategy of superior-inferior and ruler-ruled. Therefore, Gandhiji had said that the discriminatory attitudes of superior-inferior should be eliminated first. Even now, the problems of caste, colour, and class have become more acute than before. Therefore, Gandhiji is more prominent now.

Hawking's second concern, global environ-

mental crises, is correct. After reading Hawking's words, I am also worried about the coming days. The state of Nature across the entire world is terrible. It is angry due to our assault on it. Due to excessive development activities carried out on our Western Ghats, the entire Betti hills are melting and flowing like water. The landslides that have taken place in our Shirur or in Kerala are a testament to this. Our politicians are still playing politics of the election. They try to sow false belief in the people that if Siddaramaiah becomes the Chief Minister, there will be no rain. Politicians try to keep people in perpetual ignorance due to their thirst for power. The media also pours ghee on this.

But what is happening? The heat and cold currents in the Pacific Ocean - [El Nino and La Nina] are causing rain, floods, and droughts in the world. For their selfishness and greed, people of the world are cutting down forests, building bridges, building roads, burning diesel and petrol, and releasing toxic fumes like carbon dioxide, making the earth a desert. Due to this, the earth is heating up rapidly. This is causing El-Nino and La-Nina. Because preservation of Nature is very important for the healthy life of man, Gandhiji had said, “This earth meets the needs of everyone, not their greed.” In these days of the 21st century, these words of Gandhiji are more relevant than ever.

Hawking's 4th fear, Artificial Intelligence, is about to wipe out humans from the face of the earth. The world has made many technological discoveries today. Machines like robots have started doing the jobs that humans used to do. The days of artificial intelligence controlling humans have come. Humans are becoming slaves to machines. Human dignity is being eroded. Corporate capitalists have started using machine-based production methods more and more. This is leading to widespread unemployment and unrest. All humanists fear that the world is moving towards a digital dictatorship.

The gap between the haves and have-nots in the world is increasing sharply. The situation in India and the world is no different in terms of inequality. According to many studies, 1% of the people own 50% of the wealth. 85% of the wealth is accumulated by 10% of the people. Poverty will increase due to machine civilization. Gandhiji was convinced that inequality and unrest will increase. Gandhiji's fears are being proven to be completely true today. Gandhiji, in his work 'Hind Swaraj' written in 1909, discussed in detail what should be done if man is to live with dignity. In it, Gandhiji said that machines should be under human control. As much as possible, there should be only simple machines that reduce the labour of human hands and feet, such as plough, charaka, and pulley. But today, the great civilization has completely swallowed up the ideas of people like Gandhiji.

Many times I wonder why Gandhiji would have said these words. Gandhiji, who had seen cities like Mumbai, London, and Durban, understood all the perversions of urbanization. For example, the first train in India at that time started in 1853. The first car started in 1854, in Mumbai. The first electricity-generation system in the country started in 1905. The first bus service started in 1926. The first plane in 1911. With the advent of electricity, trains, buses, and airplanes, it was possible to travel across the country more quickly. Gandhiji had many objections to technological progress and urbanization. Gandhiji believed that if man only changes physically without changing mentally, he will have to suffer its consequences. He believed that modernization and industrialization destroy the spirit of man.

Organizations like BJP, RSS, Bajrang Dal,

Vishwa Hindu Parishad, etc., which call themselves right-wing in India, are as dangerous to humanity as the Nazis of Germany and the Fascists of Italy. People with this mentality murdered Gandhiji. All religious organizations in the world, including political parties based on religion, are a threat to humanity. These right-wing organizations are irreligious. They are also in Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity. They are against the minorities of their respective countries, against marginalized communities, and against women. They think that women are machines that give birth to children. Therefore, if they are not rejected, they will become dangerous to humanity. They are already on that path. In our country, the BJP and its affiliates often put forward the argument that it was right to kill Gandhiji. They worship Godse. I think that the murder of Gandhiji in India is a prelude to the destruction of humanity in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi's teachings and ideals transcend time and borders. They have influenced movements for civil rights, social justice, and sustainable development around the world. Gandhi's vision was not limited to India's freedom struggle; it was a universal vision that uplifted humanity through the principles of truth, non-violence, and compassion.

Gandhiji's principles are still relevant in the 21st century. The world is facing problems such as rising inequality, environmental degradation, conflicts and growing social alienation. At such times, Gandhiji's ideals of peace, justice, brotherhood and sustainable development offer a beacon of hope. Gandhiji's idea of democracy was deeply intertwined with his belief in non-violence. He strongly believed that the strength of democracy lies in its ability to uphold the will of the people and that successful democratic governance can be achieved through non-violent means.

Today we are witnessing a trend that is undermining the very idea of democracy. The BJP-led central government is ignoring the democratic mandate and subjugating elected governments with majority. Gandhiji, who advocated people power and the sanctity of democratic institutions, would have undoubtedly opposed such measures. Gandhiji believed that any society can be measured by how it treats its most vulnerable and marginalized sections. Gandhiji's vision of justice was to eliminate the deep-rooted economic and social inequality and discrimination in society today. Gandhiji's Sarvodaya concept was that the progress of society is meaningless, if the weak are not uplifted.

Gandhiji's vision was not just about political freedom; rather, it was about the social and economic development of every individual, especially women. He dreamed of true freedom where women could walk out in the middle of the night. No matter how much the country has achieved today, women still face problems. Brutal cases of rape and atrocities on women show that we still have a long way to go in achieving Gandhiji's vision of freedom. We will not be truly free when our mothers, sisters and daughters live in fear. Today's Gandhiji challenges us to continue the fight for gender equality, to create a society where women live with dignity, freedom and independence.

The silence of the BJP government at the Centre on the horrific violence against women in Manipur is noteworthy. Its silent support for individuals who are accused of serious crimes like violence against women, is noteworthy. By not taking decisive action, the BJP is sending a dangerous message. It is promoting a culture of tolerating and perpetuating violence against women. Gandhiji would have strongly opposed such indifference and urged us to stand up for the rights and safety of women.

Gandhiji condemns any form of violence and holds those responsible accountable.

Gandhiji's idea of brotherhood is rooted in vasudhaiva kutumbakam - the world is one family. He believed that we are all related and our future is intertwined. Today's polarized world and divide-and-rule ideologies seek to pit one community against another. In contrast, Gandhiji's message of brotherhood says that our strength lies in our unity, in our ability to embrace diversity through mutual respect and understanding. However, today, communalism is at its peak all over the world, threatening the very foundations of our societies. Gandhiji's 21st century incarnation undoubtedly seeks to rectify this. He wants a world where everyone is treated with equality and justice, regardless of religion, caste or creed. Gandhiji reminds us that peace can only be achieved when every person is valued.

Long before the term "Sustainable Development" became a global buzzword, Gandhiji advocated for a way of life in harmony with Nature. He warned against the dangers of uncontrolled industrialization, which he believed would harm people and the environment. Gandhiji's concept of Gram Swaraj was about how small communities could live in harmony with their environment, use resources wisely, and ensure that future needs were not compromised. Today, as we face the threat of Climate Change, Gandhiji's principles of sustainability are still relevant. We need to reshape our development models. We need to move away from the constant pursuit of growth and towards one that prioritizes the well-being of people and the planet.

Our government is committed to pursuing an equitable and sustainable development path that respects the natural resources of the State and ensures a better future for our children. We work towards creating a society in Karnataka that embodies the ideals of Gandhiji. We are committed to promoting peace and harmony, ensuring justice for all, ensuring security for women, building a spirit of brotherhood and promoting Sustainable Development. Let us draw inspiration from Gandhiji's life and legacy and strive to shape a world that is characterised by the values of truth, non-violence and compassion that Gandhiji was proud of. Along with the freedom struggle, his struggle also went against social evils such as inequality and untouchability in society.

It has been a hundred years since the first Belgaum session of the Indian National Congress in 1924. In his Presidential Address at the session, Mahatma Gandhi emphasized religious harmony and cordial relations between people speaking different languages. He also spoke about the steps to be taken for the welfare of the oppressed sections of the society. The government will take all possible steps this year to celebrate the centenary of the Belgaum Session of the Indian National Congress in a grand and meaningful way.

The Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi has provided a good platform for dignitaries, Gandhians and thinkers from all over the country and abroad to come together for discussions and dialogue. My congratulations to all the office bearers of the Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi for organizing such a unique symposium. May the good ideas that emerge here reach everyone. I hope that students in particular will understand Gandhiji's principles. Let me conclude by saying that this is an opportunity to illuminate the Gandhiji within us.

THE GANDHIAN TALISMAN IN GOVERNANCE

Shri H.K. Patil, Hon'ble Minister for Law & Parliamentary Affairs,
Legislation and Tourism, Govt. of Karnataka

This room is filled with Gandhian stalwarts, whose very lives stand as a message to all. It is a privilege to be in the presence of such great souls. This seminar, therefore, is not only significant for Karnataka but also holds immense importance for India as a whole.

We are honored to have with us Mr. Carl Malamud, a friend and professor from California. I must highlight his remarkable dedication and commitment to Gandhian values, he made a unique contribution. He has taken the initiative to provide assistance in digitalizing every possible document authored by Gandhiji across the world. I am thrilled to share that, with the assistance of Professor Malamud, Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi has successfully digitalized around 11,000 books, amounting to over a lakh pages. I congratulate Mr. Vishukumar, Mr. Dinesh, and Professor Malamud for this outstanding achievement.

As Prof. Shivaraj mentioned earlier, our Honorable Chief Minister has conveyed a powerful message to the state, which I believe also resonates deeply with all those working to propagate Gandhian thought and literature. However, our Chief Minister, Mr. Siddaramaiah, has consistently demonstrated his commitment to building and developing institutions.

Allow me to cite an example. When Ho. Srinivasiah requested the construction of a building for Gandhi Bhavan, even he did not anticipate the level of support he received. Mr. Siddaramaiah not only accepted the demand but also initiated contributions for constructing Gandhi Bhavans across districts. Today, more than 25 Gandhi Bhavans are complete.

We often discuss Gram Swaraj, one of Mahatma Gandhi's greatest concepts. Mr. Siddaramaiah's contribution to Gram Swaraj extends beyond rhetoric. His government has enacted the Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, embedding Gandhian philosophy into our democratic system. Additionally, the establishment of institutions like the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj University furthers Gandhian ideals for future generations. Whenever approached for matters related to Gandhi, our Honorable Chief Minister has always been kind and supportive, and I am confident he will continue to support Gandhi Bhavan.

What do we lack in our daily lives? We often forget Gandhi's teachings and unnecessarily politicize his legacy. Gandhi emphasized three key principles: non-violence, truth, and communal harmony. If all political parties, leaders, and workers practiced these values, our country would undoubtedly enjoy a peaceful atmosphere.

I hope Sudheendra Kulkarni Ji, who served as an advisor to former Prime Minister Vajpayee Ji, will agree with me. Consider the state of affairs then and compare it to now. Unfortunately, some actions, such as the establishment of a temple for Godse, send a troubling message. Should we remain silent on such issues? We must take a stand, and I am certain that this seminar will shed light on these matters.

Our Chief Minister in the speech highlighted a stark reality: 85% of the country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of just 10% of the population, while crores of families remain below the poverty line. Recognizing this disparity, he has made it his mission to uplift every family above the poverty line in Karnataka. Through revolutionary measures such as the government's guarantees, over 58,000 crore rupees have been spent to help more than one crore families rise above poverty. These transformative steps bring joy and equity to society.

Gandhi provided invaluable advice, particularly to young people, politicians, and volunteers. His wisdom continues to guide us. It is time we draw lessons from his life, remind our country of his teachings, and realign ourselves with Gandhian thought and philosophy.

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY THE GANDHIAN WAY

Shri Ramachandra Rahi, Chairman, Central Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, New Delhi

After listening to the speech of the Honorable Chief Minister Shri Siddaramaiah, I did not feel as though a politician was speaking; instead, it felt as though a thinker was addressing us. As I stepped into the premises of Gandhi Bhavan and this hall, memories of Shri Ho Srinivasiah came rushing back. We deeply miss him. He once shared with me that our Chief Minister assured him his doors would always be open for him and for the Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi. I have personally experienced this, and the outcomes are evident here today.

Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi units exist in all states, but Karnataka stands at the forefront with its activities. After Gandhiji's assassination, not only the party leaders of that time but all the nation's politicians recognized the importance of continuing Gandhiji's work and ideas. It was then decided by the Indian National Congress Working Committee to establish the Central Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi. Our first President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, along with Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Acharya Kripalani, and many other stalwarts, were its founders. These founders were leading the ruling party or government at the time, but they resolved that this organization would not rely on the government but instead depend on the people.

To achieve this, they appealed directly to the citizens of the nation for their support and trust to carry forward Gandhiji's work and ideals. The people responded wholeheartedly, contributing generously to the Central Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi. This was a significant departure from the conventional approach, where ruling governments establish organizations, allocate

substantial corpus funds, and run them. Reflecting on this, I recalled Gandhiji's words, where he articulated that while his dream of Hind Swaraj was for the future, the immediate priority was to ensure democracy remained on the right track. He emphasized that the wheels of democracy must move steadily and in the right direction.

Gandhiji emphasized that the immediate task was to ensure that the wheels of democracy move on the right track and continue progressing. On one hand, he spoke about the nation's democratic framework, and on the other, he introduced the concept of empowering democracy by focusing on its core component—the voter. He believed that voters should become thoughtful, aware of their responsibilities, and united to such an extent that elections would be impossible without their active and informed participation. Strengthening the foundation of democracy and guiding it along the right path were the two roles Gandhiji envisioned for the nation.

He had a clear understanding that the country's progress was inevitable, as it was a mandate. However, he stressed that there must be harmony between the nation and society. To achieve this, he advocated for the establishment of new societal values while transforming outdated ones through frequent and large-scale campaigns or movements. This vision led him to propose the idea of the Lok Sevak Sangh, and after his martyrdom, the Sarvodaya Samaj was formed to carry forward this mission.

I share this with you today, friends, because the events of January 30th must never be forgotten. We cannot allow that assasination to fade from our memory. It marked a conflict between moral force and brute force—a calculated assault that began with the assassination of Gandhi.

We have made efforts to preserve and strengthen the moral fabric of society, ensuring that noble forces prevail over brute force in shaping our nation and community. However, we have not been entirely successful, and as a result, our democratic system now stands at risk.

I bring this up because the theme of this seminar is "Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century." In the current circumstances, it is crucial that we do not sit idly by or adopt a passive stance. Instead, we must confront the challenges before us, walk together with resolve, and move forward with determination.

That is why the theme of this seminar is so relevant today, as both our nation's democratic framework and the broader assembly of nations are facing unprecedented threats. I have no hesitation in saying this. Across the globe, we witness conflicts, unrest, and confrontations, alongside the destruction of both Nature and Society. In such dire circumstances, reflecting on Gandhi's teachings and moving forward in alignment with his vision are resolutions of immense importance.

As we mark the 75th year of Central Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, which is the reason for this event, it is essential to review our journey over these years. But what have we achieved? Even if we consider just a few examples, this organization has undertaken numerous significant initiatives in challenging times for India—efforts that have not been widely publicized and are thus not well-known to many.

For instance, Central Gandhi Smarak Nidhi identified two primary areas of focus. The first was to explore how Gandhi's thoughts and values could be effectively disseminated in society and the methods to achieve this. To

fulfill this objective, the Gandhi Peace Foundation was established.

Secondly, the vision that Bapu emphasized—building a new Bharat and striving for perfection through constructive work—was another cornerstone of Central Gandhi Smarak Nidhi's efforts. To realize this, the Nidhi focused on village development and initiated Gram Seva Kendras across the country. Thousands of workers and centers were established to advance this mission.

During the 1962 Chinese invasion, Central Gandhi Smarak Nidhi played a crucial role in boosting the morale of people along the borders, from Jammu and Kashmir to Nagaland. The Bhoodan Movement, another remarkable initiative, grew to such an extraordinary scale that it became a national example. Its impact was profound, touching the hearts of people and instilling noble values.

This is not a matter of imagination but a historical reality. In the Chambal region, where dacoits were notorious, many began reflecting on the immorality of their actions. Moved by the ideals propagated through the movement, they surrendered their weapons. Over 500 individuals renounced their lives of crime and pledged to transform themselves, inspired by the noble principles of the cause.

I say this because a strong democracy can only thrive when there is mutual understanding and commitment between the government and society, as well as between societal values and movements. This alignment is essential for democracy to grow and flourish.

If a nation focuses solely on controlling its people, it ceases to be a democracy and begins to lean toward fascism. Unfortunately, the signs of such a shift are becoming increasingly evident today.

That is why I emphasized the importance of valuing our work and planning thoughtfully for the future. As we mark 75 years of our journey, it becomes our collective responsibility to reflect and act with purpose.

You have heard much already, and there is more to listen to in this gathering. I, too, am here to listen and engage. My words are merely a reference to guide our shared understanding.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, its office bearers, and members for successfully organizing this event. I also express my sincere gratitude to the Honorable Chief Minister and other Ministers for their unwavering support, which has played a pivotal role in making this event a grand success.

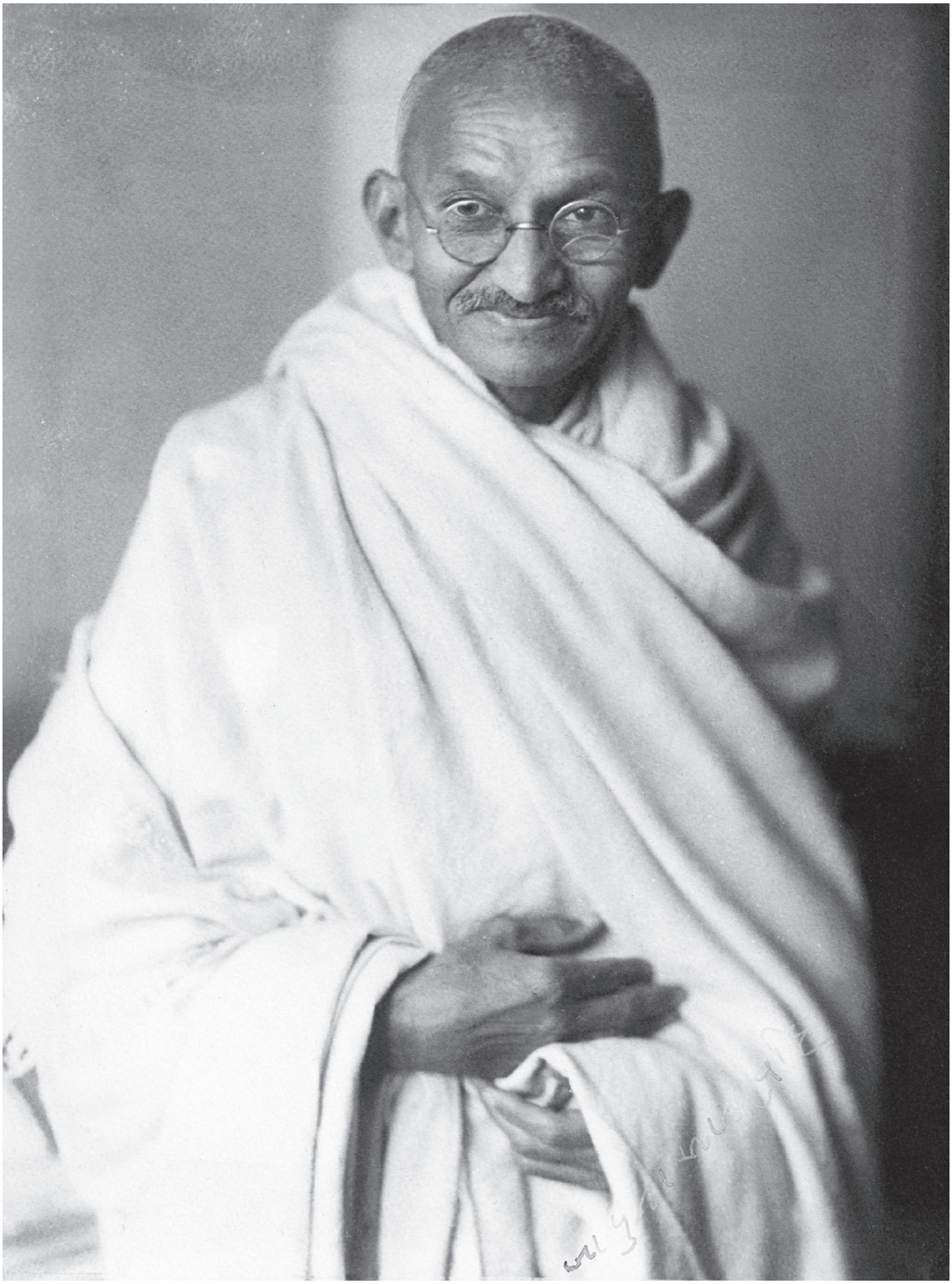
Looking ahead, we aspire to extend such initiatives across the entire country. While social organizations may hold differing ideologies, our shared commitment to democratic values unites us in serving the people. It is essential that we engage in open dialogue and meaningful communication with like-minded organizations to foster collaboration.

The challenges we face today act as a mirror, reflecting the need for both constructive and creative action. Gandhi's vision of achieving complete Swaraj emphasized the importance of balancing constructive work with non-cooperation and Satyagraha. These two elements must work in tandem. While those who represent brute forces operate with calculated strategies, we must unite the noble forces of society, strengthen their collective power, and protect democracy by empowering the people.

As we commemorate 75 years of the Central Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, let us remember that this celebration will be truly meaningful only if

it inspires us to cultivate a strong willpower for change. The clarity of our vision and the direction of this change are crucial. If this seminar can achieve even a fraction of this, it will provide us with immense strength and unite us as allies in this mission.

I sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the success of this event—those who listened, spoke, and supported it in various ways. On behalf of Central Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, I offer my heartfelt gratitude to each of you. Thank you!



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

UPHOLDING GANDHI'S LEGACY

Shri Tushar Gandhi, Author & Great-Grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba Gandhi

The entire Gandhi family is present here, and I feel no different or special because of it. For me, what truly matters is not merely being part of a biological family but belonging to an ideological family. That is far more significant and impactful.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah ji for supporting the Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, enabling them to organize programs like this. However, this gratitude is also accompanied by a deep sense of concern. When the Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi was established, it was envisioned as an institution that would not rely on government funding for its programs. Yet today, we find ourselves in a situation where such reliance has become inevitable.

This prompts a critical question: why have we reached this point after 75 years? Across the country, state units like the Maharashtra Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi and others struggle to conduct a single event without government support or cooperation. Why have Gandhi institutions, which once stood strong and independent, become so helpless?

Seventy-five years ago, when the Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi was founded, half of its corpus came from public contributions, reflecting the collective spirit and commitment of the people to Gandhian ideals. Today, that public cooperation seems to have waned. Why have we allowed this decline? Why are we unable to organize events or sustain programs without external assistance?

These are pressing questions that demand introspection and analysis. If we truly wish to honor Gandhi's legacy and strengthen the institutions established in his name, we must identify the reasons for this dependence.

The crisis we face today concerning Gandhian ideas and philosophy is indeed alarming. Gandhi himself, during the Dandi Yatra in Surat in 1930, emphasized the importance of introspection, urging us to "turn the searchlight inward." This timeless advice is more relevant now than ever—it is imperative to examine ourselves, understand where we have gone wrong, and determine why we have become so helpless in preserving his legacy.

Gandhian thought is fading, not because it has lost relevance, but because we have failed to uphold its strength. Why is this happening? Bapu's greatest strength was his unwavering connection with the people. His words alone could inspire an entire nation to rise in unity and action. Today, however, if we were to stand at an intersection and speak of Gandhian values, it is unlikely we would attract even a single listener. This stark contrast between Bapu's era and the present reflects the widening gap in how we engage with his philosophy and its essence.

Institutions built by Gandhi are being taken away from us, and this is not merely an accident. These losses are not solely the result of an unsympathetic or ideologically opposed government. The vision of such forces is clear—to dismantle the Gandhian framework, to silence his voice in public discourse. But the deeper tragedy lies in the role played by individuals within the Gandhian community itself, those who have acted as modern-day Jaichands and Mir Jafars. These individuals have betrayed their responsibility, handing over these sacred institutions into the hands of the government or allowing them to fall into neglect.

We have already lost iconic spaces like the Sabarmati Ashram and Gujarat Vidyapeeth —pillars of Gandhian thought and action. These institutions, once vibrant centers of moral and intellectual energy, are now shadows of their former selves because those entrusted with their care failed to protect them.

The recent revelation that a portion of Sabarmati Ashram's land has been handed over to an organization led by Jaish Patel, the son-in-law of Gujarat's former Chief Minister Anandiben Patel—an organization with no evident ties to Gandhian philosophy—is deeply troubling. This raises urgent questions about the state of Gandhian institutions today. When asked, the trustees of Sabarmati Ashram claim ignorance. How can this happen, and why are we so helpless?

This helplessness is not new; it reflects a pattern of neglect and betrayal. Rahi Ji's example of the Bhoodan Movement is a stark reminder. Bhoodan was one of the biggest revolutions, now it has devolved into a scandal, with the lands reclaimed by landlords. The silence around these issues is deafening. We, who should be the guardians of Gandhian thought and action, remain mute witnesses. Gandhi's philosophy emphasized the power of agitation—not for agitation's sake, but as a moral force to challenge injustice and create alternatives. Why, then, are we hesitant to agitate today?

In the past two years, we have witnessed movements across the country—farmers' protests, labor strikes, and other demonstrations of public dissent. While individual Gandhian thinkers and leaders have participated in these movements, where were the Gandhian organizations? The absence of institutional support is glaring, and society is taking note.

We often talk about engaging youth in Gandhian thought, but what are we actually doing to address the challenges they face today? Take unemployment, for instance, which has become one of the most pressing issues in the country. What would Bapu do if

he were here? He wouldn't remain confined to an ashram. He would analyze the root causes of the problem, devise practical solutions, and inspire action. His approach would combine immediate relief with long-term systemic change.

So many problems plague society today—inequality, environmental degradation, social discord, and unemployment among them. What alternatives are we offering? Are we building pathways for youth to engage with Gandhian ideas in a meaningful way? Are we creating solutions rooted in self-reliance, community cooperation, and sustainable development?

The Satyagraha movement in Rajkot is a powerful reminder of how Gandhian ideas were put into practice during times of crisis. One of the core reasons for the movement was the harassment of women by the king of Rajkot, and it was the women of Rajkot who took the initiative in launching the Satyagraha. To support their cause, Kasturba Gandhi, along with other leaders, traveled there, showing the depth of commitment to both women's rights and nonviolent resistance.

Fast forward to today, and we see a similarly troubling situation unfolding in Manipur, where the region has been burning for over a year. Women in Manipur have been subjected to horrific violence and atrocities, including rape and other forms of abuse. In the face of these grave challenges, I have to ask: How many women who follow Gandhi's ideology have made their way to Manipur to offer support? How many Gandhian institutions have taken concrete steps to help establish peace and bring about change in this strife-ridden state?

Even more concerning is how Gandhi's legacy is invoked selectively. When Prime Minister Modi speaks about the Russia-Ukraine conflict, he invokes Gandhi's name and calls for peace. However, in the case of Manipur, where the crisis has been prolonged and women are suffering, Gandhi's ideology has been conspicuously absent from the conversation. This, I believe, is not merely a failure of political leadership but also a failure of Gandhian institutions and supporters to engage where the need is greatest.

The troubling reality is that we have become so dependent on government support that many of our efforts are rendered ineffective. We have become helpless, too dependent on external sources to fuel our own initiatives. If Gandhian institutions cannot act in times of such crisis, then what is the true value of those institutions? What use is Gandhian thought if it is not being actively applied to the problems of the day?

I find myself in a position where my own words seem to contradict each other, but I am here today to present a request to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Bapu, as you may know, established his first ashram in South Africa, called the Phoenix Ashram. This year marks its 120th anniversary, which is being celebrated in South Africa. My grandparents, Manilal Gandhi and Sushila Gandhi, were sent by Bapu to care for that ashram, and they spent their entire lives there. My father and his two sisters grew up in that environment. Even today, my father's younger sister, Ela Gandhi, continues to manage and oversee the operations of that ashram.

With this deep connection to Bapu's legacy, I wish to humbly request the support of Siddaramaiah ji. As we approach the 120th year of the Phoenix Ashram, we are planning a special program to commemorate this important milestone. However, I have found it difficult to secure support from my own state for this endeavor. If you could extend your support to this program, it would be an

opportunity to showcase what Bapu envisioned for the ashram system and its role in the broader struggle for justice.

Bapu emphasized the importance of the ashram as a center for struggle and a place where Satyagraha could sprout. In his words, the ashram was not just a physical space, but a land of awakening, a source of moral strength, and a beacon of resistance. Today, more than the memorials, the example of the ashram is desperately needed. It serves as a powerful reminder of the values Bapu stood for and the ways in which his ideas shaped the struggle for justice. Therefore, we kindly request that if possible, you could help us organize a program in Bengaluru to honor the legacy of the Phoenix Ashram.

Bapu's life and sacrifice, especially the last two years before his tragic assassination, were deeply heartbreaking. He witnessed the collapse of his dreams, the very ideals for which he had dedicated his entire life. Between 1946 and 1948, India experienced what can only be described as the "Dance of Hate." These years were marked by deep divisions, communal violence, and a breakdown of the brotherhood that Bapu had worked so tirelessly to foster. In the final days of his life, Bapu realized, with a heavy heart, that the dream of unity for which he had sacrificed everything was slipping away.

Seventy-five years later, we find ourselves in a similar situation. Hatred, divisiveness, and violence continue to plague our society. The ideals of brotherhood and peace seem to be drowned out by the forces of hatred and division. We are increasingly divided—by language, region, religion, and caste. It seems the only times we unite as a nation are during moments of national pride, like a cricket match between India and Pakistan or during the threat of war. These are the rare instances when we come together as "Indians." Otherwise, we remain fractured and distant from one another.

The dream for which our ancestors sacrificed their lives is no longer the India we see today. Bapu's India was a vision of unity, justice, and peace, built on the ideals of nonviolence and truth. But today, it feels as though the nation is moving toward the ideals of figures like Savarkar and Godse, whose visions stand in stark contrast to Bapu's. This shift is, in part, because we, the inheritors of Bapu's legacy, have not presented an alternative vision for the country. Gandhian institutions, which were once at the forefront of the struggle for justice and equality, have become increasingly inactive and ineffective.

Bapu was a lawyer, but he rejected the adversarial nature of courts and believed in resolving conflicts through mutual understanding and agreement outside of legal proceedings. Yet today, many of the institutions inspired by him seem to embrace the very system he sought to transcend. How can we expect to guide others along the Gandhian path if we ourselves are not walking it?

I apologize if my words sound harsh, but I feel a deep frustration as I reflect on how the Gandhian philosophy has weakened over time. The need for change is urgent, and sometimes the only way to heal is to take the bitter medicine of self-reflection and action. We must ask ourselves: Why have we become so weak? Why do we not protest against the injustices we see around us? We claim to live in a democracy, but where are the Gandhian institutions in the democratic electoral processes today? Movements like Bharat Jodo have emerged, but Gandhian organizations have largely remained absent from these struggles. How can we claim to be Gandhian if we do not participate in the movements that seek to address the very issues Bapu cared about?

If we want to revive Gandhi's ideas and restore their relevance in the 21st century, we must be willing to engage in these movements. We must show up, be active, and lend our voices to the struggles for justice, equality, and peace. This is the way forward—it is the only way to regain credibility and strength. The time for action is now.

The Salt Satyagraha of 1930 remains one of the most significant and powerful acts of resistance in India's freedom struggle. At the time, many leaders initially dismissed the importance of challenging British authority over something as simple as salt. They considered it trivial, not realizing the deep symbolism behind the act. Gandhi's action was not just about the salt; it was about awakening the collective consciousness of the people and uniting them in a common cause against colonial oppression.

On April 6, 1930, when Gandhi took that first fistful of salt in Dandi and declared the beginning of the salt satyagraha, it wasn't just a symbolic gesture—it was a call to action. People across India, in every village, began to defy British salt laws. This movement created ripples of resistance that made the British government anxious, even sleepless, as they watched the spread of defiance across the country. But today, we must ask ourselves: How many of us can gather even 100 people to begin a movement for justice and peace? Can we replicate the same power of unity that Gandhi mobilized back in 1930? What happened over the last 75 years that weakened our collective will, our capacity for resistance? The answer lies within ourselves. It is our complacency, our apathy, and our growing dependence on others that has led to our present state of helplessness.

If we don't pause and reflect on these changes, we risk losing the very essence of what Gandhi stood for. If we continue to ignore this crisis, soon we will find that there will be no institution left to celebrate the legacy of the freedom struggle. Over the past 75 years, many Gandhian institutions have faded into obscurity or become irrelevant. In another 25 years, the name of Gandhi might disappear altogether from our collective memory.

I am associated with an institution in Kolhapur where I am actively involved in supporting their work. Many visitors who come there directly ask us to stop using Gandhi's name, stating that they would be willing to provide funding if we did so. This raises an important question: Why is this happening? It is our responsibility to address and change this situation.

Future generations will not forgive us if we fail to preserve and uphold Gandhi's legacy. It may be necessary to bring Gandhian thoughts and ideas from abroad, but we must first reflect on our own actions. When we present Gandhian ideals to others, we must embody them ourselves. Gandhi always emphasized that before sharing a message with others, one must first live by it. Sadly, too many people preach these ideals without truly understanding or practicing them. Thank you

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

Shri Kumar Prashant, Chairman, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi

Today, Gandhian institutions and workers find themselves navigating a new and challenging environment. The obstacles we face are undeniably significant, but how should we approach and understand these challenges?

Consider a pivotal moment in history: the partition of the country, which took place during Mahatma Gandhi's lifetime. Despite his staunch opposition and tireless efforts to prevent it, Gandhi could not stop the partition. Does this signify a failure on his part? I do not believe so. There are powerful forces in history that can render even the most extraordinary individuals, including Mahatma Gandhi, powerless in certain moments.

Similarly, we are striving to address the challenges of our time. While these challenges may appear overwhelming, we must persevere and find ways to overcome them. As Gandhian workers, I can confidently state, with well-founded arguments, that we are responding to these situations to the best of our abilities.

Take Manipur as an example. Since the tragic incidents began, one group has been consistently working among the affected communities—the Gandhian youth group. From the very onset, friends from Gujarat arrived to extend their support. In Delhi, I proposed a meeting to bring together the Kuki and Meitei communities. From the beginning, it was made clear that our work in Manipur would not favor one community over the other; it would be dedicated to the wellbeing of Manipur as a whole.

We have been actively working in both Kuki and Meitei camps, even in an environment devoid of dialogue and fraught with hostility, where tensions could ignite violence at any moment. This group has remained engaged

for nearly a year now. While we may not be able to resolve the entire situation, the complexity and gravity of the challenges demand difficult answers.

We are acutely aware of our weaknesses, both as individuals and as institutions. We recognize our limitations, but despite these obstacles, we remain committed to finding a way forward.

If we had not been committed to this work for so many years after Gandhi's passing, we wouldn't even be in a position to organize such efforts today. The fact that this is happening is a testament to the fact that, somewhere, people are still striving toward his ideals. But how can we make this work stronger? This is a question I often ask myself because, like many of you, I work in Gandhi's name. As a small soldier in this movement, having dedicated 50-60 years of my life to this cause, I continue to reflect on what is required for Satyagraha to be truly effective in today's world.

During Gandhi's time, Satyagraha was not a one-size-fits-all approach. It evolved and adapted to the challenges of each era. There was the Satyagraha in Champaran, in Kheda, and the Salt March—each distinct in its methodology. Satyagraha takes on different forms to address the needs of its time, and today we must ask: What form must Satyagraha take to address the challenges of the 21st century?

When I think of how Satyagraha might be applied today, I ask myself: Is society in India engaging in Satyagraha in its own way? If I were to ask everyone in this room to undertake Satyagraha, what would it look like in today's context? How can we, at an individual or community level, use the weapon of Satyagraha to confront the challenges we face in the 21st century?

To level up, the first step is to speak the truth—nothing more, nothing less. This is something we often fail to do because we are afraid to tell the truth. Truth can be dangerous. I have spoken the truth myself, but I know how difficult it is. Truth is a five-letter word that can be more dangerous than an atom bomb.

Throughout history, anyone who has stepped forward to speak the truth has had to pay a price for it. But even at the beginning of Satyagraha, the word "truth" was not always central to the movement itself. We need to ask ourselves: Do we have the courage to tell the truth? If yes, then we can follow this path.

If you cannot speak the truth yourself, there is another way to practice Satyagraha: stand with those who speak the truth. This too requires courage. Standing with someone who is telling the truth is not an easy thing to do, because you will be marked and counted. But it is a role you can adopt.

Satyagraha can only be judged by you—no one can decide it for you. You have to make that decision yourself. You need the courage to stand with people who speak the truth, whether it's Medha Patkar, those working in Manipur, or those standing up in Kashmir. There are many places where people stand alone and tell the truth. You must ask yourself: Do you have the courage to stand with them?

When you stand with someone in Satyagraha, it's not just one plus one equals two; in Satyagraha, one plus one equals many. When one person stands with another, their collective strength multiplies. You have to ask yourself, do you have the courage to stand with those who speak the truth?

If you don't have the courage to stand with them physically, there is another way to be part of Satyagraha. People are standing in battle, speaking the truth—support them wherever you are. Simply say, "I support him;

his objective is right, and he is speaking the truth." To do this, you don't have to be present at the location, nor do you need to leave what you are doing. All you need to do is express your support, because you believe in the truth they are speaking.

In Gandhi's early days, when he returned to India from South Africa, he carried a bag filled with letters. He addressed the editor and requested the publication of these letters. In each letter, he wrote the name of someone who spoke the truth and said, "I support him." This is one way of supporting, and it doesn't require much. All you need is the courage to write your name in support of the truth.

I am from Maharashtra, living in Mumbai, where the Shiv Sena was once very powerful, and no one dared to speak against them. A friend of mine wrote a long letter against the Shiv Sena and showed it to me, asking me to send it to the newspaper for publication. I agreed to send it, but only on the condition that he would write his name. Without a name, publishing it would be meaningless. This leads us to the third option: supporting Satyagraha requires the courage to put your name behind it. This too demands bravery.

What I am saying is, think about it and apply it to yourself. You come to a seminar, listen to a speech, but you need to ask yourself, "What role am I going to play?" I recall a seminar in Mumbai where the topic was "Is Gandhi relevant today?" Jayaprakash Narayan began by saying, "Whether Gandhi is relevant or not, history has already decided that." Gandhi's relevance has been defined by history; there's nothing more we can add or take away from that. But remember, if you are sitting in a hall discussing Gandhi's relevance, and that's the only thing you're doing—then you are irrelevant.

If you truly want to discuss Gandhi's relevance, you need to choose the role you want to play. I mentioned a few options—now, you decide. With courage, decide which role you can take up. If you cannot speak the truth, then stand with those who do. If you can't stand with them, support those who speak the truth. If you lack the courage to do either, there's another option: "Don't stand with or support those who are doing wrong." Have the courage not to support people who are wrong. By doing so, you strengthen the cause of truth. This is also a role you can consider playing.

I often feel uncomfortable and troubled when I see this happening. Many people, despite knowing the truth, are still following the MLA or Minister, and it's concerning. These individuals, who are some of the biggest wrongdoers in the constituency, have become elected officials, yet people, including respected individuals, are eager to approach them and even take photos with them. If you are doing this, you need to pause and think about who you're really supporting. By doing so, you're unintentionally giving legitimacy to those who may not deserve it. It's essential to reflect on the role you're playing here. I refuse to stand by and support what is wrong. We should feel ashamed to align ourselves with such figures or endorse their actions, even through something as simple as a photo.

I've spoken about the four roles, and if you lack the courage to take a stand and embrace any of them, then stop considering yourself a true citizen of this country—you are not upholding the essence of democracy. To be considered a civilized citizen, there must be at least one clear sign of responsibility. We are citizens of this country, not subjects of a monarchy. The moment the Constitution was established, we became citizens, with the rights and responsibilities that come with it.

The responsibility of a citizen is reflected in

taking on a meaningful role. When people simply gather without a defined purpose or role, it becomes a crowd. But what is a crowd? It's just a mass of people with no real thought or intention behind it. Democracy, however, transforms that crowd into citizens by encouraging individuals to take on roles. Democracy means you must choose your role and not just blend into the crowd. If you fail to do so, you cannot call yourself a true citizen of a democracy. Being a citizen requires the courage to choose a role and actively engage in it. This is the essence of Satyagraha, which remains highly relevant in today's world.

When you choose to support the truth, it aligns with the principles of Satyagraha, and that is good. If you stand firm with the truth, it becomes something great. But when you personally decide to speak the truth, it becomes something truly remarkable.

Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, but let's move beyond that story. The essence of Gandhi lies in a new time, with a new vision, and we must think about the new roles we must take on. Gandhi introduced these principles, and this Gandhi represents our unity and the courage to take steps forward together.

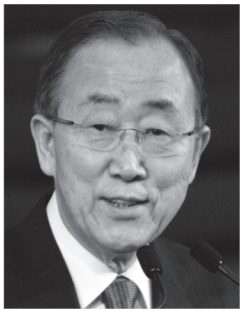
If we have the courage, I believe there is still much work to be done today. This seminar is an opportunity to understand our roles and the role of others in this cause. We have not lost everything; there are many new challenges ahead of us. We must confront them, and in doing so, we can create a new atmosphere that embraces Gandhian principles.

SESSION 1

GANDHI, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND GANDHIAN RESPONSES

Ban Ki-Moon, Former Secretary General of United Nations



Namaste to all of you. Bengaluru, the renowned tech city, has always been at the forefront of innovation and progress.

It is with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation to talk, driven by my deep affection for India and my lifelong respect for the principles espoused by Mahatma Gandhi. Before diving into the substance of my remarks, I would like to share with you a bit about my personal connection with Gandhi's legacy.

I began my work as the 8th Secretary General of the United Nations on January 1st, 2007. Just five months later, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution designating October 2nd, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, as the International Day of Nonviolence. This pivotal resolution recognized the profound influence of Gandhi's philosophy, vision, and strategy of non-violence, which not only inspired me but also shaped the lives of many global leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela. In the modern history of the world, Gandhi stands as the greatest teacher and practitioner of non-violence.

In addition, his leadership continues to inspire countless movements for change across the globe. Like many others worldwide, I have long held a deep admiration and respect for Mahatma Gandhi. My personal connection with his legacy began in 1972 when I visited Rajghat in New Delhi as a young Korean diplomat. That visit left a lasting impression on me. Later, in 2015, I had the privilege of visiting Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat during my tenure as Secretary General of the United Nations. I was greatly moved and inspired by the ashram, by its aesthetic simplicity and pervasive purity.

The theme of this seminar is Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century. The theme precipitates me to ask myself, as I

am sure that it will cause all of you to ask yourselves. What are the major challenges and problems that we, humanity, are currently facing in the 21st century? And what are the main lessons we can learn from the past and the main opportunities in the present, which can help us overcome those aforementioned challenges so we can succeed in creating a brighter world for our future generations?

In this respect, I would like to share my reflections with you on three key challenges in the 21st century. First, let me begin with the most pressing challenge, namely the climate crisis. Cascading climate change is a defining threat of our time. Indeed, if the world fails to reach the targets and timelines of the historic Paris Climate Change Agreement, the consequences is economies alike, causing a crisis of environmental displacement on an uncontrollable scale. It can also trigger tensions related to food, water, resources and more, both within and between countries. Government, civil society, organizations, and businesses around the world have recognized the inherent dangers of climate change and the great urgency of coming together in cooperation and partnership to holistically address it.

When India deposited its instrument of ratification to the Paris Climate Change Agreement with the United Nations on the auspicious day of 2 October 2016. I said then, "What better way to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi and his legacy for people and planet". In this context, I call on the Indian government to demonstrate its elevated climate leadership by making further efforts to achieve net --zero emissions by 2050.

The second challenge I would like to highlight today is closely interlinked to the imperative of protecting the planet and its people through the achievement of the entire set of tasks of sustainable development. During my time as UN Secretary-General, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the historic Sustainable Development Goals SDGs in 2015.

SDGs guide us as we strive to apply to all countries. After all, even the rich have not fully achieved all the goals for all of their citizens. However, it is a matter of deep concern that the world is still far away from meeting the fast-approaching deadline of 2030 to achieve the SDGs.

Today, these countries have made remarkable progress in lifting countless people out of abject poverty. India has also made considerable progress. I take this opportunity to commend India for its notable efforts. One task in this regard will become easier if we are guided by Gandhi's wise mantra, "Earth provides enough to satisfy everyone's needs, but not everyone's greed."

I now come to the third challenge. The 21st century has witnessed unprecedented progress in scientific and technological knowledge that promotes material prosperity, which is an indispensable human need. Yet I often wonder with sadness and anxiety why we have become poorer in spiritual knowledge, which is a requisite for peace, harmony, and happiness in our neighborhoods, communities, countries, and the world. Indeed, there is a great strength in diversity, and countries that celebrate diversity, and defend democracy, all should learn from the exemplary life of Mahatma Gandhi

I firmly believe that everyone has a moral responsibility to act wherever they may be and everyone has a part to play in addressing the biggest challenges we are facing now and fostering the creation of a brighter world. Let us expand our collective efforts to advance peace, sustainability, prosperity, and dignity for all.

SATYAGRAHA FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Dr. John Challadurai, Professor and Head, Dept. of Gandhian Studies MGM University, Aurangabad

Satyagraha and Sarvodaya were Mahatma Gandhi's most outstanding contributions to the contemporary life of a nation state. The fundamental concepts satya and ahimsa - truth and nonviolence - can be found in all the world's major religious and philosophical traditions. Gandhi's originality lay in the way he fused them in both theory and practice, in personal life and public life of both individual and society.

When Gandhi was leading the Indian community in a struggle for justice, in South Africa, he adopted a novel method of fight. It was a fight without employing violence. He called it a struggle by 'truth force'. As it is a force based on love, he called it 'love force' or 'soul force'. Resisting the wrong, without harming the wrong doer. With the help of his fellow men in the struggle, he coined the term 'satyagraha' to name his struggle which was essentially a 'nonviolent resistance'.

Soon he realized the fight against injustice in society, would be effective only if it addressed all the causes of injustice in the society. Thus his satyagraha evolved into a reform movement. While injustice has to be fought against, the climate of justice has to be created, observed and maintained. This realization led him to further refine his satyagraha as a way of life.

This methodology stems from a certain fundamental belief that Gandhi had drawn from the wisdom of Indian tradition. The Sanatana Dharma, which means 'the ancient way of life', of Indian subcontinent propounds a non-dualist faith that can be summarized as 'the whole world is the manifestation of the Creator'. There is no distinction between the Creator and the creation. This fundamental belief is reflected by the great old saying '*aham brahmasmi*' (I am That: I am the Creation), and the philosophy is called

advaita. His faith in the non-dualist nature of the creation, led him to evolve a way of life – satyagraha - that is all inclusive in effect and mutual or reciprocal in its function.

This article is to understand Satyagraha as a way of life and a method of converting a social situation into one of creative experience for all, in the light of Gandhiji's conceptualization and practice of Satyagraha. In the first part the article would dig out the concepts, connotations of the terms. In the second part, its application by Gandhi in his time, in various contexts. The third part would strive to contextualize the methodology to suit present challenges.

Satya - Truth

The term satyagraha has its roots in *Satya*, which in Sanskrit, means Truth, and *agraha* which means 'enthusiasm' or 'fervency'. Gandhi says satyagraha means 'fervent adherence to truth' or 'steadfast adherence to truth'. It also means unconditional 'insistence on truth'.

In order to understand the all encompassing spirit of his methodology of fight, we need to understand what he meant by Truth and nonviolence.

Gandhi drew his understanding of truth primarily from the Ved and Upanishad. In the letter he wrote in 1905 to Lord Curzon, the then British viceroy in India, Gandhi explained to him how Indian scriptures have dealt with the Truth comprehensively. He stated in the letter, that the term *Satya* is derived from the root word '*Sat'* means 'to be', 'to exist', that which is real; it also means, 'being', actual, right, wise, self-existent, essence, as anything really is, as anything ought to be. It means, sincere, existent, pure, good, effectual and valid. *Sat* means absolute, the archetypal Reality; Natural Law of Eternal Truth. The raison d`etre of all existence.

Gandhi's long momentous life, in his own words, was one continuous experience of truth realization. He articulated that realization variedly at different times using the verses from the scriptures. The sum of his realization is:

- Truth is God, or God is nothing but Truth (we come across this idea in every religion – Gandhi)
- Absolute Truth which is total and all encompassing. It is indescribable, because it is God. Other things can be true only in a relative sense.
- Truth alone prevails and not untruth. Truth is the pathway which learned men tread.
- Brahma (Creator) is truth eternal. , Truth is eternal Brahman. Everything rests on Truth.
- All things are founded on truth, nothing is higher than it.
- Laws of nature are expressions of truth, and virtues are but forms of truth and all vices are forms of untruth.

Existential definition of Truth:

Truth, in its absolute sense, is 'all-encompassing Reality' the 'eternal Reality' 'timeless, boundless Reality'. However, for humans who are finite beings, truth is regarded only in the 'existence', as Truth and existence are convertible terms. Gandhi observed that, as life 'exists' as part of the larger reality, for humans, 'life' is the closest manifestation of the Truth. Speaking about the way to realize God or Truth, he said, the "only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can be done only by service of all. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours."

Nonviolence:

As life is 'real', and 'existence' and 'Truth' are convertible terms, one can assume that 'to exist' or 'to live' is the self-evident primary purpose of life. Therefore, life has to be sustained. We as 'social beings' rely on others for our livelihood, for the pursuit of life, and it has to be done so without hurting or terminating other lives. As every 'other' person is 'life' (truth) who too is pursuing life, our reliance on others has to be one of reciprocally sustaining. It means, one has to sustain one's life by sustaining others' life, through a reciprocal transactional relationship. Such reciprocal transactional relationship towards mutual sustenance is called as 'nonviolence.' It is called nonviolence, because non-compliance to this fundamental position, becomes a violation of the pursuit of life. You cooperate and you live. Whereas, if you betray the one you rely on, you lose cooperation, and you lose life, and it is a violation of the very purpose of reliance.

If 'life' is truth, then 'living' is an experience of the truth, and all the norms (towards 'mutually beneficial interdependence') that enable life, are part of the 'truth'. Mahabharata (Indian classical epic) enumerates them in the following manner: Truthfulness, equability, self-control, absence of self-display, forgiveness, modesty, endurance, absence of envy, charity, a noble well wishing towards others, self-possession, compassion, and harmlessness are thirteen forms of truth.

Fearlessness, sagely purity, steadfast pursuit of wisdom, charity, control of senses, sacrifice, study, austerity, uprightness; Harmlessness, truthfulness, absence of anger, resignation, peace of mind, avoidance of calumny, pity for all beings, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of restlessness; Energy, forgiveness, endurance, purity, freedom from hatred and from pride – all these are his who is born to the divine qualities, O Bharata... The sum of these norms of life is called 'truth'. The practice of each of these is called 'nonviolence', for, non-compliance to any of these becomes a negation of the very purpose, the life.

The practice of the norms is called 'nonviolence' for, it represents a commitment to non-violate (not to defy) life and its pursuit. Hence, Gandhi held firmly the belief that, "non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment." He said, *Khsama Virasya bhushanam*. 'Forgiveness adorns a soldier'.

Precisely because nonviolence serves the purpose of sustaining life, the religion of non-violence, Gandhi opined, is not meant merely for the rishis and saints. It is meant equally for the common people too. Indicating the primacy of it, Gandhi stated, 'non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute... Non-violence is the greatest force human has been endowed with. Truth (God) is the only goal one has. Truth cannot be, never will be reached except through non-violence. That which distinguishes human from all other animals is his capacity to be non-violent. And s/he fulfills his/her mission only to the extent that s/he is non-violent and no more. The dignity of human requires obedience to a higher law – to the strength of the spirit.

Nonviolence as social norms:

Norms are two kinds: Natural law and human made social norms. These norms are inviolable. Law of the nature in relation to life is reciprocal, non-exploitative and mutually dependent.

'Social norms' is a broad term representing the norms that help us conduct various walks of human life, such as socio, economic, political, religious ... life of humans. As human life is all about being 'social', a team

pursuit (family, community, society, nation), there is a necessity for evolving system and structure that help humans conduct collective living.

The system and structure of the team (community, nation) are establishments representing the collective will (Constitution) of the nation, and its application in the form of Acts, Ordinance, Policies, program of action becomes the mission of the nation. All these work in cohesion to serve one purpose, 'upholding life' or the 'Truth'.

All these put together becomes a grand truth for us and in the worship of all these, we fulfill the purpose of the very Creation.

To sum it up, life realization amounts to truth realization. An act is truth realization only when the act

1. Enables life of the person (the pursuer)
2. Without harming fellow beings (co-pursuer);
3. In tandem with the norms of the society (by contributing to the life of others)
4. In compliance with the law of nature.

According to satyagraha, any act that is not in compliance with the above four, cannot be termed as an act of truth or nonviolence.

Application:

Under Gandhi's leadership Indians in South Africa began their protest against unjust government, and their protest was in the form of 'Passive Resistance';

Soon Gandhi realized their adoption of nonviolence as a means of protest, was not because they were afraid of brutal reaction that a violent protest might evoke from the opponent (South African Govt.), but because, violence is futile, violence leads to death of oneself or the other (opponent) and we do not have the right to take away life. Gandhi said, our nonviolent protest was not a 'weapon of the weak', but of the strong (in understanding) and of the brave who were ready for ultimate self-sacrifice, rather than killing, for the cause of the objective (justice and life). Gandhi's nonviolent resistance was a 'weapon of the strong'. The unique features of satyagraha are:

1. It is a dynamic way of combating social evils without entertaining hate and violence.
2. It shuns the weapon of violence, not out of fear of death or defeat, but out of the belief, that 'killing is wrong even for right purpose,' and the opponent too has the right to life.
3. Moreover, Gandhi said, it was not a fight against any people; but against the erroneous perception of fellow being, which affects one. It was simply 'insistence' upon what is right / truth.
4. It is an endeavor towards change of mind and heart of the 'opponent' to see what is right / truth. It is an effort to change unjust law by transforming unjust 'perception' – mind.
5. Satyagraha is an all-sided sword; it can be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood it produces far-reaching results. It never rusts and cannot be stolen. (M K Gandhi, Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, (1938)Navajivan Pub. House, Ahmedabad, P.82)
6. While the instrument of violence can eliminate the opponent, it does not guarantee change of heart and mind of the people opposite to us.
7. Not 'violence' which is coercive, but love which is persuasive, alone can encourage the opponent to see our point and transform (change heart) accordingly.
8. We cannot use weapon of killing against the 'opponent' because they are none

other than our own kith and kin. We are 'one people' partakers of the same mission - life. We have to live together here and hereafter.

9. The fact that 'we are one people' is not understood by those in power (our opponent). That is exactly the root of the problem. It is our responsibility to make them understand.
10. Use of violence by us will give the opponent a reason to hate us and retaliate with greater force and in the process to eclipse / sideline the genuine concern we raise.
11. While we do not use violence, we have no control over the opponent's method of countering us. They may nevertheless, unleash violence to silence us.
12. Because I love my brother (partaker in the common mission) who is my opponent now, I will use only the force of 'love' , and a. Withstand his violent attack through patient self suffering, (if there ought to be blood shed, let it be mine) and b. Persistently attempt to make him/her understand what is right / truth by constantly appealing to his/ her reason, with the belief in the essential goodness of the opponent ('All humans are good' and 'belief in the essential goodness of the opponent' is a fundamental tenet of Satyagraha) and conscience through selfless devotion to a righteous cause, self-suffering and love.
13. Our love for the opponent is unconditional, so much that even if s/he persecutes me, I'll go to his / her aid at the time of him / her facing crisis. a. Eg. forming 'Ambulance Corp' during Boer war, and 'Stretcher bearers' during Zulu revolt; b. During Natal Railway strike, Gandhi's team withheld their strike so that Gov would be at ease to deal with the other issue. This showed how dignified and valiant they were.
14. A satyagrahi must never forget the distinction between evil and the evil –doer. He may not even employ needlessly offensive language against the evil doer, however unrelieved his evil might be. For, it is an article of faith with every satyagrahi that there is no one so fallen in this world cannot be converted by love. A satyagrahi will always try to overcome evil by good, anger by love, untruth by truth, himsa by ahimsa. There is no other way of purging the world of evil.
15. In this process the struggle becomes a dialogue between two parties on truth / righteousness and to arrive at a mutually compatible understanding.
16. The struggle was essentially a clash of perception. Through Satyagraha, the 'coolie' people established the truth that they are 'amiable' people, worth co-existing, by successfully demonstrating their organized valor, discipline and endurance to extreme stress yet remaining unprovoked.
17. We need to coexist. A violent fight either eliminates (violence is exclusive; nonviolence is all embracing and inclusive), or leaves such bitterness (of defeat and injury) that destroys every possibility of future fraternity (World War – 1 and 2 did it in a big way). Satyagraha brings happy ending, an elevation in human civility, and interpersonal health.
18. Satyagraha is seriously putting into action Buddha's instruction to overcome hatred by love and Jesus' teaching to 'love your enemy'.

Conclusion

Satyagraha as a method of solving problem, has few unique objectives :

1. It targets the issue, not the person behind the issue; while it attempts to eliminate the wrong, it strives to enlighten the wrong doer at the same time.
2. Focussing on the education of the opponent is essential, because, in satyagraha, restoration of relationship between the warring parties is considered as the primary purpose.
3. The aggressive intent that is evident in any compelling conflict, is integral to satyagraha too. However, such aggression is effectively converted into creative expressions, by insistently engaging oneself in constructive work.

In a globalized human society, where boundaries of knowledge, economy, science and technology have been a thing of the past, where every individual life is a result of a well structured global cooperation, negative behaviour such as hatred, ill will, enmity, suspicion, ego and jealousy too are redundant traits. In that sense Satyagraha is a proven method of building 21st century human society.

DISARMAMENT OF MINDS & HEARTS

Dr. Mario Marazziti, Former Italian MP, Senior member of the Community of Sant' Egidio

I'm speaking on behalf of the community of Sant' Egidio, the friends of Gandhi. I want to take seriously the very core of your initiative. Are Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts and teaching and life something over? Is it, or what can save the world another time in our times? I remember when he said, that after the atomic bomb, there have been cataclysmic changes in the world. Do I still adhere to my faith in truth and nonviolence?

Has the atom bomb shattered that faith? On the contrary, it has reinforced it. It has vividly shown that truth and nonviolence are not only enduring principles but also essential for the balance and harmony of the mind. In this realization lies the hope for a better world—a world where violence is abandoned, and the profound beauty of living together in peace is rediscovered..

Our journey began along a path illuminated by Saint John Paul II in 1986, with a remarkable day of prayer and fasting for peace held in Assisi. This was a time marked by global tensions, epitomized by discussions of "Star Wars" and the ideological divide between the Soviet Union and the Western world, led by figures like Ronald Reagan.

Saint John Paul II deeply felt that the prayers of Christians alone, no matter how fervent, were not sufficient to confront the challenges of the era. He envisioned a collective effort, where people of all faiths would gather, each praying in their own tradition, united in their plea for peace—a divine gift and the most beautiful name of God.

Inspired by this vision, the Community of Sant' Egidio, took up the mantle in 1987 to carry forward the spirit of Assisi. At both grassroots and higher levels, they committed to fostering peace, guided by the final call to action: to become artisans of peace in a fractured world.

Each of us is called to become an artisan of peace—a builder of understanding, harmony, and reconciliation. This is how our paths intersected with the Hindu world, with its profound spiritual traditions, and with the remarkable individuals organizing this forum. Over the years, the power of prayer and collective action has demonstrated its tangible effects, often in extraordinary ways.

I recall the Civil War in Mozambique, a conflict that ravaged the country for 16 years, claiming over a million lives and displacing millions more. In 1992, through the persistent efforts of the Community of St. Egidio and its allies, a peace agreement was achieved after 26 months of negotiations. This milestone ended a devastating chapter of violence and provided a testament to the transformative potential of dialogue, justice, and the nurturing of a shared humanity.

This experience also underscored a broader truth: globalization cannot be limited to economies and markets alone. We must aspire toward a spiritual globalization, one that fosters shared values and collective responsibility across cultures and nations.

However, as we progress, we face increasingly complex conflicts—wars where clear distinctions between right and wrong are obscured. Yet one principle remains unshakable: the aggressor, the one who initiates violence, bears the responsibility for invasion and conflict. In these uncertain times, the call to become artisans of peace becomes even more urgent, as we seek to heal divisions and rediscover the soul of humanity amidst the complexities of a globalized world.

War is the one who starts, but there are the ancient reasons for the war, the roots. The only way to start defeating wars is to put ourselves on the side of the victims. And the victims are entire peoples blackmailed by those who make war, like prisoners. In our point of view, must be the point of view, the angle of view of the victims. And this helps us to understand the absurdity of the war, even when we have good reasons to complain or to accumulate hatred because we suffer, or our beloved ones, suffered a lot. In this moment, we do not know. And then there is the military. The United States speak of 70,000 military that died on the Ukrainian side. But if we look at the Gaza-Israeli war, a terrible attack on October 7th does not cancel the problem that at least 20,000 civilians, lives were destroyed in Gaza, only this month.

I come myself from Nairobi and from the last session in Rome of the peace negotiation for South Sudan. It became independent 13 years ago. We had that independence. There was a civil war inside Sudan to create South Sudan as an independent state for 20 years. It is 13 years from the very first weeks after the independence that some war started again inside. They have never tasted a normal life without killing, receiving and creating pain. So is it possible to do something in this world? It is still actual Mahatma Gandhi's call to disarm our hearts as Jesus taught all the Christians, to love your enemy. It is the toughest thing to learn and to learn how to live it. But we can look in the face at wars and not be just part of the war propaganda communication.

We live in an infocratic society, at least in the West, but global agitation is making the world united in that. So what is narrated is very often more real, and looks more real than reality. This makes it very difficult to decide what is good, what is bad, and to stay on the side of the truth that is the only true religion.

This is how the world has started to be scattered and shattered, because in this infocratic society, the individual becomes the only certainty. And we are starting to be a world of billions of individuals instead of being a world that has a common destiny, and feels

the common destiny, as the normality. The world has stopped to identify ourselves in the other one.

You cannot destroy yourself if you look at yourself in the eyes of the other one. And this is why at Sant' Egidio, we think we have to work together all religions, all people of good faith, of people of goodwill to re-identify ourselves in the other one, to create from many. It is the we that can save the world. We must recreate the sense of community in our communities because it is the only way in which the other ones still remain, my brother, my sister, my friend and not a possible enemy.

I am one of the co-founders of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty. For years, I heard those who support the death penalty saying only when you eliminate, when you execute, when you destroy the life of the killer, of the bad person, then there will be closure, there will be some justice, and some new balance in the world. But I met the father of a woman who had been killed during the Oklahoma bombing in the United States where a state building was destroyed and more than 100 people died in that attack. The father had lost a beautiful young woman who was helping foreigners, was helping refugees, doing a good job, was a good woman, was a good girl. And the killer was a former Marine who had decided that he wanted to recreate justice because the state in his opinion had done something wrong and he killed, destroyed the lives of many. So one father was hating the killers, but then saw on television the father of the killer who was really in pain because he was asking himself, where and what and when, I was wrong. I tried to raise a good person, a good boy. He was a good boy. He was a good soldier in the military. And they together reinforce the movement of martyrs, victims, families for reconciliation. Because only reconciliation, only forgiveness can heal the world. And this is valid at a personal level and at the state level.

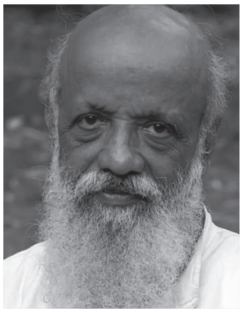
We are not longing for known words. We have to recreate a united world where our new generation can taste the taste of living together in peace, building up what is necessary for everyone in our planet. So we can start the disarmament of hearts and start from ourselves. This can be a key to keep changing the world even if maybe it is not tomorrow. It was the great wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi that could see what was looking as impossible. So let's start to disarm our hearts. Let's build peace inside us.

SESSION 2

GANDHI FOR SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

GANDHI AS A LIVING METAPHOR

Mr. Prasanna Heggodu. Gandhian and Senior Theatre Person



My talk may seem disappointing as it might sound negative, but I'd like to explain my journey. I'm a theatre person, and sustainability began through theatre. In theatre, sustainability is essential—there's no way to do it without being sustainable. Theatre has no financial abundance, and everything must be recycled. Just like how we revisit and reshape the works of Kalidasa again and again, sustainability is deeply embedded in our blood.

My interest in sustainability grew over time, and after spending years in Delhi, a bustling city, I became tired and moved to a small village called Heggodu near Sagara. There, I immersed myself in handloom work for 30 years. I became so focused on this that I almost completely left behind my theatre work, forgetting about Delhi and Bombay in the process.

Eventually, the cooperative I worked with, comprised of rural women from below the poverty line, became the largest producer of natural dye handloom in the country, with the capacity to produce 30 to 40 thousand meters of cloth every month. But there's another side to my story: I used to be a scientist. Before switching to theatre, I was doing research at IIT Kanpur. These two contrasting paths sometimes make me reflect deeply, and I feel a sense of sadness about the journey they've taken.

For instance, I remember when our Chief Minister, Mr. Siddaramaiah, talked about Stephen Hawking and his book where he discusses the survival of humanity. Hawking, with his characteristic unemotional tone, predicted that humanity would not survive for more than five decades. As I heard this, I started to feel that we might have even less time than that to truly survive. However, this realization didn't make me feel despair. Instead, I began to think about what I could do in response to this. I told myself that,

regardless of the outcome, I still have to live and I must continue living the way I want. So, I'm actually quite at peace with it. I'm carrying on with my work, but with much less tension and pressure about changing the world.

As I mentioned, this came to me spontaneously. I was listening to everyone speak, particularly one man who talked about the challenge of changing the human heart. As I listened, I thought, "Oh my God, it takes so long to change hearts." It took Gandhiji years to inspire transformation, and it's the same for everyone. Changing hearts is a slow process, and building organizations to facilitate such change takes even longer. But do we really have that much time? I don't think we do. As a scientist, I know we don't. So, what do we do?

We've been discussing theories here—how to build a civilized society. We know what needs to be done, but the issue with our society is that it has become too easy, too luxurious. We're asking people to give up these comforts and their ease of living. But the truth is, the only time animals lived without ease or luxury was when it wasn't accessible to them.

The most profound thing about Nature, about animals, is their inherent limitations. Animals are bound by their limitations, and this is what makes them divine. Nature, in its order and constraints, reflects God. A fish can only swim, and a bird can only fly. A bird cannot swim, and a fish cannot fly. This harmony of limitations is what makes Nature perfect.

But then came the human hand, and everything changed. This is what troubled great minds like Gandhi, Buddha, Basava, and Shri Ramchandra. They understood the implications of this freedom. Even the Bible tells us this through the story of the Garden of Eden. God cherished humanity but expressed concern, saying, "I like you, but I am worried." And that worry became reality when humans crossed the boundaries of their natural limitations.

But we have moved millions and millions of kilometers away from the Garden of Eden. The teachings of Buddha, Basava, Kabir, and others emerged long before the era of automation. They all spoke profound truths and sought to guide humanity toward civility. Sometimes their efforts bore fruit; often, they did not.

Then came automation, and everything changed. Gandhi stands out as a pivotal figure in this shift—he was the first saint to emerge after the advent of automation and the last saint before it became deeply entrenched in society, especially in India. Gandhi occupies a transitional space in history.

What makes him significant is that he managed to remain a saint while recognizing and incorporating automation as part of the broader challenge of constructing a civilization. In doing so, he bridged the gap between the pre-automation vision of great thinkers like Buddha, Basava, and Shri Ramchandra and the realities of a world increasingly shaped by machines.

So, we know that Gandhi offers a solution—if there is a solution—for global warming, for the moral crisis, the ethical crisis, the socio-economic crisis, and every crisis we face. But can we succeed in realizing his vision? We might fail.

Let me tell you, simply organizing numbers won't bring Gandhi into reality. Gandhi was never about numbers; he was always a metaphor. As some of the speakers rightly pointed out, even his contemporaries in the Congress Party often dismissed his best programs. They thought he was a foolish man.

Take the Salt Satyagraha, for example. Many thought it was a ridiculous idea. But it

succeeded because it was the most extraordinary metaphor, executed with utmost commitment by 78 people who marched with Gandhi. That commitment resonated with millions—78 million people ultimately joined.

The challenge lies in transforming Gandhi once again. We must move beyond the formal Gandhi, the Gandhi in books, the theoretical Gandhi, and turn him into a living metaphor. That is the task before us, and we must strive to do it if we can.

How do you do that? Honestly, I don't know. But let me wrap up here since other speakers are waiting, and I don't want to take too much time.

After spinning the charkha for about 38 years, I realized that the organization I had been part of was now running—not in the exact way I had envisioned, but it was functioning. So, I decided it was time for me to step away. I didn't want to become the old man poking his nose into the affairs of the organization, not allowing them the space to make their own mistakes.

Last year, I moved out of Charaka. I began to wonder, Where do I go from here? I had lived in the midst of the serene and lush Western Ghats, the greenest part of the country. The contrast couldn't have been starker when I decided to move to Bombay—the exact opposite of everything I had known.

In Bombay, I've observed something very interesting that not many Gandhian thinkers or bureaucrats seem to notice. Over the last two to three decades, a significant cultural shift has been happening. Young people are dropping out of comfortable homes and secure office jobs, not to rebel like they did during the Independence Movement or join movements like the Naxalites in the 1970s, but to chase their dreams of becoming actors.

In areas like Versova, Andheri West, and Madh Island, you'll find nearly 50,000 aspiring actors, often living four to a room. Initially, I was cynical about this, thinking, They're all chasing stardom. But then I realized something deeper. Many of them have nothing else to turn to but their creative aspirations. They want to express themselves. A lot of them are Dalits, many are women, and they're all seeking a voice.

The moment they encounter someone who can guide them—a teacher, a mentor, someone like me—they are eager to learn and express themselves.

This, too, is an independence movement, though we fail to see it that way. Families across the country are grappling with this phenomenon—sons and daughters leaving home, parents spending enormous sums trying to dissuade them from pursuing this uncertain path. Yet, these young people persist. They are drawn to acting, to storytelling, to self-expression.

I've decided to spend my time in these ghettos of aspiring actors—in places like Versova and Andheri. I call them the “actors' ghettos.” Who knows? Maybe in this struggle, I'll find some solutions. If I do, I promise to share them with all of you.

TRANSFORMATION OF PERCEPTION INTO GANDHIAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Prof. D.M. Diwakar, Honorary Director, Development Research Institute, Jalsain, Bihar

It is my privilege and an honour to be here in celebration of platinum jubilee of Central Gandhi Smarak Nidhi organised by Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and share my thoughts. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on a few ideas that have been in my mind, along with some concerns that I wish to express.

To be honest, I don't see myself qualified to be here. I don't claim myself as a person, who fully understands Gandhi, though I have tried to grasp parts of his thoughts. My connection with Gandhian thought began in my childhood. My mother used to spin the charkha, and I grew up wearing khadi, introducing me early to the concept of khadi economics within my own family.

The next stage of my understanding came through my father's involvement with the Bhoodan Movement. As a co-worker in the field, he worked tirelessly to find solutions and allocate pieces of land to the poor. Through him, I witnessed first-hand the struggles and efforts to address the cause of social injustices.

The third stage began when I joined the Gandhian Institute of Studies in Varanasi. It was there that I started reading Gandhi in depth. Initially, I thought Gandhi was simple to understand, but the more I read, the more complex he became. As a student of economics trained in social science research, I tried my best to fit Gandhi's ideas into the frameworks that I had learned, but I failed.

Gandhi defies such reductionist categorization. Some call him a practical idealist; others describe him as an evolving thinker who learns from everyday life and transforms those lessons into practices for the people. Yet, Gandhi himself claimed that he didn't create anything new—that he merely received ideas from society and gave them back to the society.

Over time, I realized that understanding Gandhi is not straightforward. Instead, I began to wonder if I could better understand myself through his teachings. That search continues, and this pursuit has brought me here today—to listen, learn, and engage with all of you over these two days.

The concern I wish to bring before you is about the growing emphasis on qualities and sustainable development. Can we derive anything meaningful from Gandhi's teachings to address this?

When we talk about sustainable development, it has, unfortunately, become somewhat of a fashionable term. Global initiatives, such as the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have popularized the idea. While these goals aim to be achieved by 2030, the term "sustainability" is now attached to almost every development agenda.

However, my question is: **Are we genuinely working towards sustainability with what we currently have, or is it just a convenient label? Are we truly committed to sustainability, or are we merely using it as a buzzword without addressing the underlying issues?**

If we are sincere about sustainability, we need to revisit fundamental principles. I have found inspiration in a couplet from the Upanishads, specifically from the Shanti Mantra: *"Om purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate, purnasya purnamadaya purnamevavashisyate."*

This verse teaches us about the completeness and balances that are inherent in the universe. Mathematically, it can be interpreted as zero plus zero equals to zero, and zero minus zero also equals to zero. While simplistic, this idea reminds us that taking from or adding to completeness that doesn't disrupt its essence. It highlights the equilibrium that Nature maintains, which is often disrupted by human interventions in the name of so-called development.

As Mr. Prasanna rightly pointed out, when hands came into use, they were an extension of our limbs—a natural evolution. But when technology extended those hands, we began exploiting Nature uncritically without administering rationality. Where to, has this led us? We now find ourselves in a crisis, and ironically, it is only during such times that we look back to Gandhi for solutions.

The first thought that comes to my mind is that Gandhi is not merely an idea or a concept to be selectively applied. You cannot adopt the comfortable aspects of Gandhi while discarding the parts that challenge or create inconveniences for us. This is a crucial point: Gandhi's philosophy is holistic and cannot be fragmented into pieces for our conveniences.

It's not just the government that needs to reflect on this. The entire development process - whether by policymakers, corporators, or individuals - follows a pattern where solutions are sought only when crises arise. For example, the reality of carbon emissions reveals a stark divide. Developed nations contribute disproportionately to emissions, reaping the benefits of luxury, while the poor —who contribute far less—bear the brunt of the consequences. Reports, including the World Bank Report 2024, highlight this inequality: as income and wealth disparities grow, so too does the carbon footprint of affluent societies, creating a direct correlation between luxurious lifestyles and environmental degradation.

If this is the outcome of our development model, can we truly claim to be committed to sustainability? The answer, as Gandhi might argue, is no—because sustainability cannot

coexist with irrational consumption. Gandhi never endorsed an approach that allows for mindless indulgence while seeking superficial fixes. His philosophy offers not a piecemeal solution but a comprehensive worldview, one that challenges us to rethink our way of life entirely. It urges restraint, simplicity, and mindful consumption, placing harmony with Nature at its core.

This raises a fundamental question: Are we willing to adopt Gandhi's vision and recalibrate our lifestyles? The allure of technology, while undeniable in its capacity to ease drudgery and provide skills, comes with destructive side effects. The imbalance we've created in Nature stems from our inability to use technology responsibly.

In the early 1930s, through his writings in Young India, Gandhi forewarned about the potential perils of unchecked industrialism. He did not outrightly condemn industrialization but pointed to its inherent dangers—its tendency to exploit nations, create inequalities, and disrupt the delicate balance of life. His critique stemmed from a deeper understanding of industrialism's impact on human values, communities, and the environment.

Gandhi specifically cautioned that if India pursued the same industrial path as Europe did, the consequences would be catastrophic. He cautioned, "The future of Europe is dark, and if India follows its path, our future will be darker still." His words were a stark reminder that industrialism, driven by greed and devoid of moral considerations, would bring not progress but exploitation and environmental degradation.

Yet, we chose not to heed his warnings. Today, we find ourselves enmeshed in the very crises Gandhi foresaw. Industrialization has brought comfort and convenience—air conditioning, electricity, and a lifestyle of material abundance—but at a tremendous cost. The exploitation of natural resources, rising inequalities, and climate change are all consequences of this unsustainable model of development.

Understanding Gandhi requires us to move beyond his writings and speeches to immerse ourselves in his actions and practices. Gandhi's transformative journey began with his deep engagement with the lives of ordinary Indians, especially those in the villages. His visit to Champaran in 1917 stands out as a significant moment, offering important lessons on how genuine change starts from the ground up.

When Gandhi arrived in Champaran, he focused on understanding the struggles of the people. He didn't impose solutions but took the time to listen and comprehend their challenges, showing that meaningful action begins with empathy and immersion.

Gandhi believed that those working for social change must shed their privileges to truly connect with the people they serve. He demonstrated this by insisting that leaders like Rajendra Prasad, Anugraha Narayan Sinha, and Braj Kishore Prasad adopt a simpler way of life. When Anugraha Babu expressed that he did not know how to bake bread, Gandhi firmly told him he must learn, as service to the people required an understanding of their daily realities. This philosophy of declassification wasn't just symbolic; it was a way of cultivating solidarity and humility.

Even today, there are individuals striving to follow Gandhian ideals, working tirelessly to address societal conflicts despite immense limitations. They may not be perfect, and they do not claim to be, but their efforts are rooted in sincerity and a desire to make a difference. Gandhi himself acknowledged human imperfection, emphasizing the importance of doing one's best within those constraints.

It seems to me that any meaningful change must begin with education. Gandhi recognized this early and, that is why he introduced the concept of Nai Talim, or Basic Education. His approach during the Champaran Satyagraha exemplified this idea. One of the key reasons the farmers in Champaran did not initially agitate against their oppression, was the lack of proper education. Gandhi understood this and made education a cornerstone of his strategy, establishing schools that went beyond traditional learning. These were not schools bound by walls but spaces for practical experiments, where students could learn through experience and develop a deeper understanding of life and society.

Gandhi's educational experiments were diverse and dynamic, tailored to the needs of the people. However, the question today is not about returning to the 1930s or replicating Gandhi's methods in their original form. The real challenge lies in reinventing and reinterpreting Gandhi's vision in the present context. If Gandhi were here today, what actions would he take? What steps would he propose for our contemporary problems?

Ultimately, nothing is impossible if we are willing to start. Whether it is creating spaces for experiential learning, nurturing values in children, or fostering disciplined satyagrahis, the journey begins with a single step. It is this belief in the transformative power of education and individual action that holds the potential to address the challenges of our times while staying true to Gandhi's legacy.

The question of the kind of education needed is indeed crucial. It is not about blindly imitating models from elsewhere but about localizing and creating a context-specific framework. We can build an educational system grounded in our own realities and needs. It's never too late to start from scratch and move forward. Despite the many crises we face today—perhaps even greater than those during colonial rule—we must remain hopeful. Many of our institutions have been dismantled, and the situation is dire, with even elected governments deviating from the people's cause. Gandhi's concern about idleness as the root cause of many social ills is still relevant today, yet the focus on employment and poverty reduction seems absent from current agenda.

Instead, the agenda has shifted towards building a *"Hindu Rashtra,"* which prioritizes temples over jobs. This highlights the need for a reimagined framework where education can create true citizens rather than mere machines of productivity. We are currently producing educated individuals who are seen as commodities, valued primarily for their placement in high-paying jobs. But where are the human beings in all of this? We now measure success in terms of ATM cards and job packages, not the value of humanity.

The challenge, then, is to reconsider as to how we build our institutions. Can we revisit the principles of the Wardha Conference and return to the foundational values that Gandhi proposed? It's crucial to reflect on where we have gone wrong, where we are now, and how we can move forward. The questions of inequality and equality are not new; personalities like Buddha, Kabir, and Basava have already addressed these issues. The real question is: can we transform these perceptions into consciousness? And this transformation can only happen through transformation of the material conditions - through education, through struggle, and through collective action.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND VILLAGE SWARAJ

Mr. Uttam Kumar Sinha, Joint Director, National Gandhi Museum, Rajghat, New Delhi

Abstract: Sustainability and Swaraj, both as philosophy and practice, has commonalities and intersections. Both have emerged from a situation of crisis, at different historical settings, provides frameworks for human society at large, for coming out of the crisis situation. Sustainability is comparatively a new concept whereas Swaraj is an older one, both are concerned with the future of humankind hence makes possibility of a comparison. Sustainability deals with social, economic and ecological spheres of human life whereas Swaraj is a political and highly moral philosophy which looks at human life, both individual and collective, from all possible dimensions it may have. Apart from their philosophical formulations both have their operative principles, namely sustainable development and Village Swaraj. With such commonalities, intersections and goals they provide an interesting and unique ground for a comparative study. This comparison is based on textual study, especially in the context of India which is as eager as other developing countries of the world to implement and take up sustainable measures to better the life condition of its larger population. Since the concept of sustainability introduced primarily from the developed countries of global North, its terminology, tools and standards are not familiar to Indian masses, hence largely alienates rather than associating them in the process. At the same time, many local and indigenous terminologies, knowledge and skills are available of not only matching but surpassing them sometimes. Then whether and how they are being utilized as better alternative than depending on borrowed knowledge and skill? In this connection the paper also attempts to understand resisting voices of civil society groups, communities and peoples' movements against government's policies, projects and measures as often they draw inspiration from Gandhi. The question arises, whether

they really understand Gandhi or merely invoking his name to pursue their own cause? Do all such resisting voices with respect to development, indicate about a different alternative framework of development? In this regard, how does Gandhi's model of village swaraj help in providing an alternate framework to approach and implement sustainable development?

Introduction: Sustainability is a new idea, a movement in broader connotation and has roots in other past movements with rich histories. Since the realization that economic development, at the cost of ecological health and social equity, did not lead to long-lasting prosperity, the world needed to find a way of harmonizing ecology with prosperity. The concept of sustainability emerged out of environment-development problematic, promised a common ground for recognition of the fact that without considering human, ecological, social and economic dimensions together no lasting prosperity can be achieved. The word sustainability now indicates programs, initiatives and actions aimed at the preservation of a particular resource. Strongly prodded from above by international and regional organisations, and pressured from below by a broad variety of social and people's movements, non-governmental organisations, the concept with subjective changes has achieved more and more prominence and serves as a programmatic goal for governing initiatives. It has also provided a ground for people, communities, ethnic groups, locales to aspire for their own long-term vision of post-industrial society, a postmodern world within its framework. Sustainable development that is its operative part, is the pathway through which vision of sustainable planet could be realized. Regardless of its wider acceptability, having been prodded from above on governments, the term is also viewed as one among the many neoclassical agendas of economic expansion, especially by critics from Global South of the North South divide. That is why a variety of frameworks and approaches are seen coming out with global, regional and local concerns for ecology and social, economic equity. But not in all of these approaches the underlying principle of "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs" [Our Common Future] is truthfully being taken care of. This definition, how so ever resonates to the values of Gandhian paradigm, it also leaves many doubts because the top-down idea of sustainability seems not to compromise with economic growth, which is not the ultimate goal of Gandhi's vision of Swaraj. Is not the continuous burden of economic growth detrimental to ecological health? Will it sufficiently be taken care of by innovative technologies as neoclassical framework of sustainability wants us to believe? Also, doesn't the definition of basic human needs of the southern part of the globe varies from the north? So, the attempt of universalizing sustainable development goals leaves many grey areas where neoclassical economy can play its game.

India's sustainability requirements are not different from the other countries of the South. Instead of approaching the problem of inequity in ecological, social and economic spheres from an outside perspective, it has to evolve from within, emerging out of own cultural and civilizational wisdom. Gandhi spoke of Swaraj in terms of a larger vision of future human society. Apart from the four pillars of Sustainability, he considered another important human dimension, that is of spirituality, which essentially requires less material possession, rather gradual

renunciation of material desire. His vision claims more equanimity with the culture, tradition and locale of India. His vision of swaraj or the word 'swaraj' is not new and untouched of sustainability discourse, evident from popular connotations like 'ecoswaraj', 'janaswaraj', swarajyatra, even jan swaraj party etc., but is often misconceived of being programmatically poor in the present set up of governance. But in a world of 21st century, ready to move forward by deconstructing existing theories, patterns and practices, his vision reoccurs with fresh vigor and better possibilities. In above background, this paper invites for a revisit to his long-term vision of Swaraj and its operative part and pathway, Village Swaraj, in the context of sustainability and sustainable development. This exercise also provides occasion to see the various possibilities of distinct but prudent approach to sustainability for India's sustainable development, free from neoclassical expansionist agenda.

The ambition of achieving a Sustainable world through the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015, after failing in achieving Millenium Development Goals, is again falling into pieces. A Global memo of Chatham House, published by the Council on Foreign Relations on October 10, 2023, says "The world is not on track to meet all 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs)"[1]. A report issued by the Earth.org on 17 June 2024 suggests that only 16% of SDG targets are on track to be met by 2030. The global progress on UN agenda 2030 has been stagnant since 2020. Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, lead author of the report says "The international community must take stock of the vital accomplishment and the limitations of the United Nations system, and work toward upgrading."[2] Covid-19 pandemic and other country-specific factors are considered to be responsible for the state of misery with regard to progress towards sustainability, however, in the global assessment India has ranked among the group of countries which has been faster than the world average in progress towards SDGs. But at the same time, annual assessment of UN Member States' performance on the SDGs found that the progress has in some cases reversed, including on obesity, press freedom, sustainable nitrogen management, extinction rates, and life expectancy at birth.

Although, India is ranked among the above average performing countries, the ever-widening inequality in social, economic and ecological spheres presents a completely different picture. It gives justified reason to believe that State sponsored measures of sustainable development is not enough to address sustainability requirement of the nation. Despite continuous economic growth, persistence of inequities creates ample doubt that something is not very transparent behind UN promoted vision and programme of Sustainable Development Goals. That is why, alternative approaches to sustainable living are emerging worldwide with more prominence. "Many collectives and individuals are envisioning more just, equitable, wiser futures, many of them based on actual experiences that shows the feasibility of such visions"[3], says Ashish Kothari. Rajni Bakshi, in her book, "Bapu Kuti: Journeys in Rediscovering Gandhi", published in the year 1998, portrays 8 such stories and was one of the first ones to capture and narrate the underlying common factors of Gandhi in many of the social-political movements in India. This genre has since grown and today there are several literatures that amply highlight the contribution of the Gandhian ideas into the re-imagination or alternative imagination of our society and country. Ashish Kothari and K. J. Joy

have compiled the most voluminous of such a book in recent times "Alternative Futures: India Unshackled", a book that compiles more than 30 eminent thinkers in four broad topics to bring their insights into imagining a future for India in over 680 pages of material.

Leftist politics has also worked in catalyzing peoples' movements in India during the recent past to dent neoclassical agenda behind top-down policies of the government. These movements, nonviolent in their character, also drew inspiration from Gandhi. Late Shankar Guha Niyogi's call for 'resistance and reconstruction' had a great influence over socio-political movements during 1980s. In recent past, powerful groups in the state of Maharashtra have compelled the government to change their developmental policies. Mukti Sangharsh Movement (MSM), Shramik Mukti Dal (SMD), Society for Participative Ecosystem Management (SOPPECOM) are some of the examples that K. J. Joy has referred to which are worth mentioning here. The fact of the matter is that Gandhian ideals have invariably influenced almost every large-scale, modern non-violent social movement in India. The environmental movement is perhaps one of the most visible and active among these which is often confronting the State with questions, critique and resistance through people's movement. By remaining within the spectrum of democratic engagement these are articulating, constructing a living alternative paradigm.

Starting from Village Industries movement led by Gandhiji, championed and stewarded by the "Doctor of Village Industries", J.C. Kumarappa, the Bhoodan movement led by Vinobha Bhave, the Chipko movement, the Narmada Bachchao Aandolan to every other movement of the current day, all these have originated and articulated themselves from the Gandhian matrix of ideas and action. "Gandhi continues to inspire today not because of the widespread knowledge of Gandhian literature or clarity of his concepts - Indeed the opposite is true, despite having such a large volume of literature, he is the most misunderstood and misinterpreted political and social leader of this country – but, through the inspiring constructive work rendered by many who have been driven by the Gandhian ideals"[4], says Ashish Kothari. Howsoever Gandhi may be understood or misunderstood, his vision developed out of his personal experiments, were based less on logic than his inner voice and intuition. Novelist Amitabh Ghosh[5] believes, 'Gandhi, like many others, understood intuitively what Asia's history would eventually demonstrate: That the universalist premise of industrial civilization was a hoax; that a consumerist mode of existence, if adopted by a sufficient number of people, quickly become unsustainable and would lead, literally, to the devouring of the planet.' Ghosh accepts, that though Gandhi was not the only one granted with this insight in the world of his time, he 'occupied a position of unique social and cultural importance, and, what was more, he was willing to carry his vision to its logical conclusion by voluntarily renouncing, on behalf of his nation, the kind of power and affluence that is conferred by industrial civilization.'

Despite Gandhi's constant opposition to modern civilization, India opted for modern development based on science and technology. Gandhi, though was not entirely against taking science and technology along in the matter of development, but was willing to Indianize the definition of science. Also in the case of industrial capitalism, he wanted to convert it in the form of village industries based on decentralized and localized economic principles. Some of the movements

of recent times, with respect to modernity and science, though inspired from Gandhi's ideas according to Sunil Shasrabuddhe[6], have their limitations in understanding of Gandhi and his value system. He gives various examples of People's Science Movements (PSMs) which believe that masses are denied wealth and enlightenment as the science movement has not reached them. It encourages scientists to come out of their labs and to go to the people and spread scientific temper and culture amongst them. PSMs view modern science as the ultimate repository of truth, wealth and enlightenment. They view people's beliefs with suspicion and often categorize them as obscurantist. The Appropriate Technology Movement (ATM) believes technology developed in one social, economic and cultural setting is not appropriate for others. Its key features are, applying modern technology to improve the tools of the masses, but the technologies used should depend on the degree of modern development. Development of technology should fully utilize the resources of a particular country. ATM recognizes indigenousness only to the extent of skills, called technical knowledge, but not indigenous knowledge per se.

The Ecological Movement and environmentalists have successfully focussed on the highly destructive uses of modern science and technology and underline the propensity of modern science to destroy internally consistent and functioning orders. But they have not succeeded in raising a debate about whether their opposition to this destruction is because it is inbuilt in the nature of modern science or is only contingently associated with it. Questions such as, does science incorporate or give shape to destructive, polluting values remains unanswered? The Peace Movement, essentially an anti-war movement, is against a situation brought into existence by modern science. The question is whether violence is intrinsically built into modern science? If this is so, then is it possible to accept it as the repository of truth. The Alternative Science Movement (ASM) contest the claims of the unique and value-free character of science. They contend that science has been an equal companion of imperialism in the expansionist policy of the European powers, and that it became universal only when the rule of Europe became worldwide. ASMs are often very close to Gandhi's way of thinking. But these remain intellectual movements, generally unable to establish links with popular practices, both in industry and in agriculture, trapped in theoretical constructs.

Shasrabuddhe's observations on popular movements deriving influence from Gandhi somehow support's Ashish Kothari's statement that “many Gandhians today haven't read Gandhi themselves much and have only started to read him carefully after their work has been called Gandhian by others.”[7] With all such distinction, the movements constructive in nature of recent times, have all found their roots in the Gandhian ideals. Localised, self-reliant, community-centric and community empowering initiatives that abound across India today that have evolved exemplary models, all originated from Gandhian roots. Many have since come to influence the State policy like the Right to Information Act (RTI), as environmentalist, Ashish Kothari points out.

Gandhi's notions of swaraj, satyagraha, and ahimsa have indeed lived on, and become even more crucial in a world that is otherwise being torn asunder by growing inequalities, ecological devastation, and continued and new forms of deprivation from basic needs for a couple of billion people. Gandhi's most important messages was to always speak truth to power. He lived this message through the

notion and practice of satyagraha, through his acts of resisting colonial power, and of challenging the marginalisation of Dalits and others in traditional Indian society. He realised though that resistance is not adequate, especially given that vast sections of Indian society were historically deprived and marginalised. This realization made him to give a call of Constructive Programme in 1940s, a process of both resistance to centralised power and of reconstruction. To put it in another way, speaking of truth to power and translating truth into practical action for improving the human condition. While his struggle is well- known, not so much highlighted are the very many programmes of reconstruction which many around him tried out as Gandhian constructive workers. Several of these programmes are also inspired by the Gandhian economist J. C. Kumarappa, and included works like production of khadi cloth, improvement in agriculture, promoting sanitation, enhancing industrial workers' lives, and so on.

Possibly one of the most ambitious of these practical experiments was the attempt to inspire direct democracy and self-reliance in the constituency of Aundh in Maharashtra. Narendra Chapalgonker[8], a former judge of High Court of Bombay has well documented this episode in his book 'Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian Constitution'. The book written in historical setting, talks of Gandhi's constitutional structure that gave prominence to villages and also why did the self-sufficient and self-governing village of his dream not find a place in India's political edifice? Here he mentions about lesser-known experiment in 70 or 72 villages of a small princely state of Aundh, now in Satara district of south Maharashtra, which continued successfully from 1939 to 1948 until the state merger with the Indian Union. The king Bhagvanrao Pantpratinidhi, who ascended to throne of his state in 1923, was a believer in giving political power to the people so that his administration would run by peoples' representatives. Gandhiji blessed the idea of the King. The young Prince of the state, Appasaheb Pant, was an activist in the freedom movement. During the year 1938, when the young prince visited Bangaluru, he had occasion of meeting with Morris Freedman, a Polish by birth, employed as an electrical engineer in the service of Mysore State, and was interested in social radicalism. Both had discussion about prospective experiment of Swaraj in Aundh. Freedman shifted to Aundh after some time to join in the democratic experiment of the King. He travelled to villages accompanying Appasaheb, the young Prince, and penned the Charter granting freedom to people of Aundh which was later proclaimed with the approval of the king. Next month the King visited Wardha to see Gandhiji to inform his decision of handing over power to the people. Gandhiji was pleased by the decision of the king and personally dictated a constitution of the state, which the King carried back to his state. A Constitution Bill was prepared in Aundh on the lines indicated by Gandhiji under its Article 2 and gave every citizen, right to life, freedom of expression, right to assemble peacefully, right to worship, equality before law, right to free basic education, right to employment and right to minimum sustenance wages. With all necessary provisions for running the Gram Panchayats of the state, the Constitution Bill was adopted by the Aundh legislature and was proclaimed on 21st January 1939. The Village Councils, apart from being responsible for revenue collections and education, looked after policing their areas. Aundh became debt-free state during the administration of swaraj. Encouragement was given to industrialization due to which a Kirloskar factory was opened

near Kundal, the Ogale glass industry was founded from the grant received by the state, and Vedmaharshi Pandit Satvalekar, an eminent Sanskrit scholar, established a large printing press in Aundh. Many experts found it to be an ideal administration.

This perhaps provides a well-documented example of proven success of Gandhian model during his lifetime. His village regeneration programme continued in post-Gandhi era also by the constructive workers of first and second generation, which later inspired a strong environmental movement during 60s and 70s, and did wonders at many remote places in India. According to a documentation of Central Gandhi Smrak Nidhi, there were 3000 such Gandhian organizations actively associated with some or other constructive work directed towards village regeneration programmes with emphasis on programmes like health, hygiene, cleanliness, Nayi Talim (education), Khadi and other village Industries, natural farming etc. Some of them are still active and contributing their lot in this regard though in a small but effective way. If all the existing Gandhian organizations start functioning like a laboratory of social and economic experimentation like that of Gandhi's Ashrams, imagine what wonder it could make towards India's progress in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

In the recent past, the Indian State has made only a few hesitant steps towards direct democracy, and consequently has moved very far from the ideal of self-reliance for communities. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments promised decentralisation of decision-making power to villages and urban wards, but severely curtailed it by not providing for financial and legal devolution, resulting in halting implementation, at best. On the contrary, Kerala's process of village-level planning, and Nagaland's commun-itisation initiative in which a part of the State government funds goes directly to village councils for use in education, health, power, roads, are examples of States that have come closer to the intent of the 73rd Amendment. But even they have been flawed or not sustained for long enough.

Therefore, it has been left to people's movements and civil society organisations to take up the resistance and reconstruction agenda, at times merging the two given their inextricably linked nature. Many of these take their inspiration directly or indirectly from Gandhi's methods of analysis, critique, struggle and reconstruction. The Chipko movement, one of India's iconic environmental and livelihoods movement in the Himalaya, which attempted to save forests from being axed for industry in the 1970s, had as some of its spearheads people who were steeped in Gandhi's ideas. In the decades since then, several prominent resistance movements against dams, for example, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, mining, or other 'development' projects that have threatened to dispossess or displace tribals, farmers, fishers, pastoralists, workers and others, have been explicitly non-violent in nature. A series of continuing farmers' agitations, from 2018-19 to date, have refused to take to violent means despite many a provocation. Others have learned from Gandhi's entreaty to focus one's struggles against the system rather than individuals representing the system, by trying to work through winning hearts including of the 'enemy'. In this sense, many movements also borrow from other inspiring figures in history. For instance, Ambedkar's influence inspired an action by the Karnataka Dalit Sangharsh Samiti (DSS), founded by Prof. Krishnappa in 1974, which called for 'Drink Some Water from Our Hands', in which they would hold a pot of water, offering it to caste

Hindus. The DSS went on to play a significant role in shaping Karnataka's political and cultural sensibilities.

In 2013, the Gram Sabha of Mendha-Lekha of Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra, rose to prominance for a movement towards self-governance. The historic decision of converting all its private agricultural land into the village commons got legal backing by using mostly-forgotten Gramdan Act, which was inspired by Gandhi's disciple Vinoba Bhave. This follows another of Gandhi's important principles, of keeping essential aspects of life support in the commons rather than be privatised: "Everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realised only if the means of production of the elementary necessaries of life remains in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others. Their monopolisation by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust."[9]

Across India and the rest of the world, today, there are incredible examples of constructive alternatives to the currently dominant system: sustainable and holistic agriculture, community- led water/energy /food sovereignty, solidarity and sharing economy, worker take-over of production facilities, resource/knowledge commons, local governance, community health and alternative learning, inter-community peace-building, re-assertion of cultural diversity, gender and sexual pluralism, and much else[10]. It can't be claimed that all of these take inspiration from Gandhi only, most probably they do not, at least not directly. But the ambience of Gandhian ideas and practices appears to have influenced very many of them.

Presently the urban developer, recreation planner and environmental conservationist are constantly dwelling upon formulating policy for sustainable residential areas across our communities. Urbanization and village dwelling have been two dominant forms of human residency for a long time. These human habitats are evolved gradually and are adapted well with life style, social and environmental limitations of societies as the model of habitant and housing style is part of culture of society. Climate change, the global financial crisis, energy security, resource depletion and scarcity, environmental degradation, species loss, water and food shortages, peak oil, extreme weather events and sea level rise all threaten the ability of the world's increasing population to exist peacefully and sustainably on the planet (Sustainable Development Framework, 2013). In recent years, as society and culture are changing, residency style and living model are changing and one of the most important changes is the lack of full consistency between life style and habitat. Thus, this leads to unruly migration of villagers to city and urban problems are at an increasing rate (Jomepour, 2012a; Gorgi et. al., 2016). If we try to create conditions for a sustainable civilization on earth, cities, townships and villages should be promoted to increase efficiency of resources and energy, reliance on responding to needs, less pollution and increased sustainability (Jomepour, 2012b).

A Neoclassical Argument suggests Market-based solutions. Neoclassical economists often advocate for market-based solutions to environmental problems. This can involve pricing environmental externalities (like pollution) to internalize costs, promoting sustainable technologies through subsidies or tax breaks, and fostering international trade to access resources and markets. Economic

growth, as viewed by many of neoclassical economists, as essential for addressing environmental issues. They argue that increased wealth can lead to investments in cleaner technologies, better environmental regulations, and improved living standards. They often express optimism about technological advancements, believing that innovation can solve environmental challenges without sacrificing economic growth.

Criticisms from the Global South suggests that the neoclassical approach to sustainable development can perpetuate existing global power imbalances. Wealthy nations in the Global North may benefit from policies that promote economic growth while imposing environmental costs on the Global South. Critics also point out that the Global North has a disproportionate historical responsibility for climate change and environmental degradation. They argue that neoclassical approaches may not adequately address the need for reparations or equitable burden-sharing. Some argue that neoclassical economics often prioritizes short-term economic gains over long-term sustainability. This can lead to unsustainable practices that deplete natural resources and exacerbate environmental problems. It is also important to note that the relationship between sustainable development and neoclassical economics is nuanced and multifaceted. While there are valid criticisms, many countries in the Global South have also benefited from neoclassical-inspired policies that have promoted economic growth and improved living standards. Ultimately, the effectiveness of sustainable development strategies depends on a combination of factors, including economic growth, environmental protection, social equity, and international cooperation. A holistic approach that considers the unique needs and circumstances of different countries is likely to be more successful than a one-size-fits-all approach based solely on neoclassical principles.

While a top-to-bottom approach can be effective in driving sustainability initiatives, it also has certain limitations like lack of local knowledge and engagement, Top-down approaches may not fully consider the unique needs, challenges, and opportunities of local communities. If local people feel excluded or their concerns are not addressed, they may resist or undermine sustainability efforts. Bureaucracy and slow decision-making hierarchical structures of top-down approaches can be slow as decisions must pass through multiple layers of management. Lack of flexibility also can hinder the ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances or new opportunities. One-Size-Fits-All top-down approaches may impose standardized solutions that do not address the specific needs of different regions or communities. Ignoring local context can lead to ineffective or even harmful outcomes. If the central authority loses interest or support, sustainability initiatives can become vulnerable to decline. Local communities may not feel as invested in the process, leading to a lack of ownership and responsibility. Top-down approaches can stifle innovation and creativity by limiting the ability of local communities to experiment and find new solutions. Lack of diverse perspectives can hinder the development of more effective and sustainable strategies. To overcome these limitations, a top-to-bottom approach should be complemented by a bottom-up approach, which involves empowering local communities to participate in decision-making and implement sustainability initiatives. This natural (Gandhian) approach

can help to ensure that sustainability efforts are both effective and equitable.

Small models of sustainable development are crucial for several reasons. A small-scale model can be implemented and tested in controlled environment, allowing for adjustments and improvements before large-scale deployment. These models are more adaptable to local conditions and can be customized to meet specific needs, unlike one-size-fits-all solutions. Smaller models require less capital investment, limiting financial risks in case of failure. Mistakes or negative impacts on a smaller scale are less detrimental than widespread consequences from large-scale projects. Small-scale projects often involve local communities, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. These initiatives can help build local capacity and skills, empowering communities to take charge of their development. Small models provide opportunities for experimentation and innovation, leading to new approaches and solutions for sustainable development. Lessons learned from small-scale projects can be shared and applied to larger initiatives. Small models can address specific local challenges and needs that may be overlooked by larger-scale projects. Successful small-scale initiatives can inspire and motivate others to adopt sustainable practices.

In conclusion, small models of sustainable development play a vital role in testing, refining, and implementing sustainable solutions. They are adaptable, risk-mitigating, community-focused, and contribute to learning, innovation, and grassroots impact. By investing in small-scale projects, we can create a more sustainable future for ourselves and future generations.

Villages, as fundamental units of many societies, play a crucial role in sustainable development. Their unique characteristics and practices often align with principles of sustainability, making them essential contributors to a more resilient and equitable future. Many villages have long-standing agricultural and land management practices that promote biodiversity, soil health, and water conservation. Indigenous knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge can provide valuable insights for sustainable resource management. Villages often foster strong social bonds and community-driven initiatives, promoting equality and inclusivity. Smaller communities can sometimes have lower levels of inequality compared to urban areas. Villages often have diversified economies, including agriculture, crafts, and tourism, which can enhance resilience to economic shocks. Supporting local markets can reduce the environmental impact of long-distance transportation and promote economic self-sufficiency. Villages often preserve cultural heritage and traditions, which can contribute to a sense of place and community identity. Sustainable cultural tourism can generate income while promoting the preservation of cultural resources.

While villages offer numerous advantages for sustainable development, they also face challenges. These include poverty and lack of infrastructure as villages in developing countries struggle with poverty, limited access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Villages are often vulnerable to climate change impacts like droughts, floods, and extreme weather events. The trend of urbanization can lead to the decline of rural communities and the loss of traditional practices. To maximize the contribution of villages to sustainable development, it is essential to support local initiatives. Governments and NGOs should support community-led projects and initiatives that promote sustainability. Need for improving access to education, healthcare,

and transportation can enhance the quality of life in rural areas. By supporting sustainable agricultural practices food security can be ensured and environment can be protected. Recognizing and valuing cultural heritage can contribute to the resilience and identity of rural communities. By addressing these challenges and leveraging the unique strengths of villages, we can create a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

It is evident from the foregoing examples that the state of sustainability cannot be achieved by meek submission to the so-called top-down approach of sustainable development because of possible neoclassical interest behind it. For that the Gandhian approach of analysis, critique, struggle and reconstruction is the safest approach which works bottom-up instead. If achieving goals of sustainable life is the ultimate aim then Gandhi's concept of Swaraj provides a better paradigm which goes beyond the sustainability paradigm in many ways. Sustainability in economic, social and ecological spheres of human life is best operational in small unit of human settlements or in communities for making them economically self-reliant, socially secure and ecologically sustained. His concept of Swaraj provides better expression for ultimate human inhabitation with added emphasis on moral and spiritual values of Indian culture and civilization. These have remained essential part of Indian culture of the masses largely residing in lakhs of Indian villages since ages. This was very well-known to him right from his Londen days after studing Indian and British historians. This is evident from some of the quotes that he added at the end part of his seminal work Hind Swaraj more than a century ago in 1909. He was crystal clear in his view that if India has to attain true Swaraj, it can only possible through the revival of its seven lakh villages. He took a dialogic approach of explaining his idea of Swaraj in conformity with Bhagwad Gita and other Indian scriptures. Instead of giving a theoretical treatise he says while explaining his concept of Swaraj:

"Ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. it will be a free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and women knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour. This society must naturally be based on Truth and Nonviolence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all-knowing Force which inheres in every other force known to the world and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living Light. In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human

agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the first or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last. In this picture, every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest wind cannot move it. In this there is no room for machines that displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family."[11]

This is perhaps the most explicit definition of Swaraj which also explains how important are villages in his scheme of Swaraj. If individual is the ultimate unit to be self-governed then village is the primary unit of local and indigenous governance, a relative Truth in other words, through which the ultimate Truth, i. e. Swaraj, will be achieved. It can, thus be compared with the ultimate goal of sustainability and relative goal of sustainable development through which ultimate state of sustainability will be achieved. By giving no room for displacing human labour with machinery, it completely roots out any scope for neoclassical agenda of market economy. In that way it is ever evolving paradigm with openness to incorporate highest common human values which abide by all sorts of faiths that exist in the world for which there is no consideration in the concept of sustainability. The role of economy in Swaraj is also restricted to meet the basic need of people instead of leaving it to the hands of a few, always seeking progressive growth which ultimately poses a constant danger to the ecological health and causes many layers of inequality in larger human society.

We know very well that the stable social structure, as we see them in the past, are engulfed in change and decay due to chaos in economic, ecological and cultural causation. The ideologies of growth, modernization and development no longer remain only possible or credible paths to future of wealth and material abundance for all. Corporate market economy which equated development with economic growth caused huge ecological damage and destruction and have marginalized a large human population and communities. Globalization resulted in centralization of power with few nations and companies, who regulate the tightly networked business economy. Therefore, a worldwide searching is going on for alternative ways of living. There are many aspects of the cultural and ecological transitions our societies need to undergo in order to preserve and enhance the pluriverse. From environmental governance to radical democracy, from craft to agroecology, from water to education, and much more. These harsh realities entail us to focus our knowledge on intersectionalities of many paradigms to both understand the dysfunction of our present lives, as well as engage with a possible convivial future.

Over the recent century and with growth of industry and technology in the world, deprivation of rural areas is increased. As villagers have low income compared to those of city dwellers, villagers are more vulnerable and this leads to their migration to the cities. This is due to geographical dispersion of villages, lack of economics to present social and professional services and lack of specialized agriculture (low productivity), limitation of land resources and lack of correct

management by authorities. Gandhi new very well that cities dominate and drain the villages so they are crumbling to ruin. He was of the opinion that exploiting of villages is itself organized violence. If Swaraj has to be built on non-violence, we will have to give villages their proper place. The status of village that Gandhiji imagined in political, social and economic structure of independent India was multi-faceted. In his scheme, the basic unit of governance would be the village, with adequate powers to conduct their administration. His concept of village swaraj demanded, along with self-sufficiency and self-reliance, political autonomy also.

To understand his village centric developmental model, one has to go through the writings of two important authors, J. C. Kumarappa and Sriman Narayan Agrawal. Kumarappa and Sriman Narain expounded his economic thought in the most holistic and original manner through his writings and life work. Kumarappa joined Gandhiji in 1929 and became Gandhiji's right hand in giving shape to his revolutionary economic ideas. Apart from many of his writings, 'Economy of Permanence' and 'Why Village Movement' gave him prominence. He entered deep into life of the poor of the land through his various penetrating surveys and studies of Indian villages.

Sriman Narayan, a comparatively young Principal of Seksaria College of Commerce, Wardha, wrote two important books 'The Gandhian Constitution of Free India' and 'The Gandhian Plan of Economic Development for India' that give a vivid outline of his village centric model. He coincidentally headed Gandhi Smarak Nidhi for quite some time before assuming position of India's Ambassador to Nepal. While mentioning fundamentals of Gandhian economics, he highlighted four underlying principles of Gandhian economics. These are; simplicity, nonviolence, sanctity of labour and human values. On these four corner-stones Gandhiji build his ideal economy of decentralized cottage industrialism and self-sufficient village communities. Narayan further argues that these self-governing little republics all over India flourished under Hindu and Muslim governments and survived wreck of dynasties and the downfall of Empire. Quoting from the report of Committee of Secrecy, 1812, he gives a glimpse of the resilience of such little republics. "Under this simple form of Municipal Governments, the inhabitants of the country have lived from times immemorial... The inhabitants give themselves no trouble about the breaking up and division of kingdoms; while the village remains entire, they care not to what power it is transformed or to what sovereign it devolves; its internal economy remain unchanged." He also gives biological and agronomical and other testimonies to prove that village communism based on cottage industrialism is not a Gandhian fad only, it is sound and scientific from various angles of vision. In support of his views, he also gives examples of ancient Europe, China and Japan where cottage industrialism had been an eminent success. Talking about objective of Gandhian economic plan, he says "The chief objective of the plan is, therefore, to raise the material as well as the cultural level of the Indian masses to a basic standard of life within a period of 10 years."

The economic plan that Sriman Narayan derived from Gandhiji's own spoken and written words and put up in order, has every possible scope of incorporating 17 sustainable goals as conceived in the vision document of the United Nations. And the Government of India can easily incorporate them in its scheme of existing Panchyati Raj model of

local self-governance. Although the village Panchyats are functioning today under the patronage of State Governments, the functional mechanism is entirely different in nature from that of the self-reliant Village Panchyat system visioned under Gandhian economic plan or model of development.

It is, therefore, Gandhi's model of Village Swaraj that provides a more elaborate vision of sustainable development by including values like self-restraint, decentralization of production and economy, giving primacy to moral and ethical values, conscious consumerism and purity of means etc. Therefore, the approach of the Gandhian model towards development is suitably more sustainable in the context of India and makes value addition to the framework of sustainable development.

Notes and References

1. Council on Foreign Relations, https://www.crf.org , as on October 10, 2023.
2. EARTH.ORG, Future, Policy & Economics, <https://earh.org>, as on June 17, 2024.
3. Ashish Kothari (Ed.) in his Introduction to, ALTERNATIVE FUTURES: INDIA UNSHACKLED, AuthorsUpFront Publishing Services Private Limited, 2017, p. xiv. Ashish Kothari is a Founder-member of Indian environmental group – Kalpavriksh, he has coordinated India's National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan process, served on Greenpeace International and India Boards, helped initiate the global ICCA Consortium https://www.iccaconsortium.org which supports the global movement for indigenous peoples' and local communities' collective territories of life. He helped in coordinating the Vikalp Sangam www.vikalpsangam.org and Global Tapestry of Alternatives www.globaltapestryofalternatives.org processes and Radical Ecological Democracy network. He has (co)authored or (co)edited over 35 books, including Churning the Earth: Making of Global India (with Aseem Shriastava), Alternative Futures: India Unshackled (ed., with KJ Joy), and Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary (ed., with Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria, Alberto Acosta).
4. From an editorial preface to the article by Kothari, A., Is Gandhi Relevant? Are there Institutions that Build Themselves through his ideas Today?, Journal of Rural Development, 38(3), 408-416. Hyderabad (2019) https://doi.org/10.25175/jrd/2019/v38/i3/147917
5. Ghosh, Amitabh, The Great Derangement; Climate Change and the Unthinkable, Penguin Random House India, 2016.
6. Sahasrabuddhey, Sunil, Gandhi's Challenge to Modern Science, Other India Press, Goa, 2002.
7. Kothari, A., Is Gandhi Relevant? Are there Institutions that Build Themselves through his Ideas Today?, Journal of Rural Development, 38(3), 408-416. Hyderabad, 2019.
8. Chapalgaonker, Narendra, (tr. from Marathi to English by Wagholikar, Subhashchandra), Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian Constitution, Routledge, Abingdon, 2016, pp 72-73. Also at Pant 1989, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aundh_Experiment
9. Young India, 15. 11. 1928, p. 381.
10. See for hundreds of such examples from India, www.vikalpsangam.org
11. Harijan, 28. 7. 1946. See also in Parel, Anthony J., Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

SARVODAYA SHRAMADANA MOVEMENT IN SRI LANKA

Dr. Vinya S Ariyaratne, Honorary President, Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka

I extend my gratitude to Mr. Sudheendra Kulkarni and the Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi for providing me with the opportunity to share my thoughts on the theme, Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century, at this significant gathering.

Let me also mention at that I am not a Gandhian scholar. My understanding of Gandhian philosophy and practice stems from my lifelong association with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, founded by the late Dr. A.T.Ariyaratne, my father. I grew up in a home filled with books, pamphlets, photographs, recordings, and printed posters adorned with quotes from Mahatma Gandhi, shaping my worldview from an early age.

In 1969, when The Gandhi Centenary was celebrated and I was only seven years old, I vividly remember how it was celebrated with my father, Dr. A.T.Ariyaratne, and with his band of volunteers organizing commemorations throughout Sri Lanka. As we gather today to reflect on the enduring wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi and the relevance of his vision in shaping sustainable and equitable development, we can draw heavily from his teachings and practice in an era marked by growing inequality and environmental challenges. Gandhi's ideas offer us a powerful framework for development, one that prioritizes human dignity, social justice and the harmonious coexistence of people and Nature.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka with its profound commitment to these values provides us with a living example of how Gandhian principles can be put into action which also meets the needs of a local context as demonstrated by our work in Sri Lanka.

The Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya, which Gandhi defined as the welfare of all, speaks directly to the idea of inclusive and equitable development. He believed that

development should not be driven solely by the pursuit of material wealth but should prioritize the well-being of every individual. This vision emphasizes the need for balanced growth that uplifts all sections of society, focusing on simplicity, sustainability, and shared responsibility. Sarvodaya as the "awakening of all" (Sarva Uday). At the heart of the Sarvodaya philosophy is the principle of Shramadan—the voluntary sharing of labor. This practice embodies Gandhi's belief in the transformative power of collective action and selfless service as essential catalysts for societal change. When people come together, offering their time and efforts selflessly, they build more than just physical infrastructure. They build trust, they build solidarity, and a deep sense of belonging.

This approach has allowed Sarvodaya to engage communities across Sri Lanka in initiatives that not only address their immediate needs but also empower them to become agents of their own development. We build the road, the road builds us. So it empowers communities in large numbers towards self-development. Gandhi's vision for equitable development was rooted in the idea of Swaraj or self-governance, where communities take control of their resources and destinies. Sarvodaya embodies the principle of empowering individuals and communities by promoting local leadership and participatory decision-making. The movement is built on the idea that communities must not be mere recipients of aid or solutions imposed from outside.

We have formed legal entities which are community-based organizations called the Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies around the country, more than 5,000 of them out of a country which has 38,000 villages and they are becoming self-sustaining and forming a common wealth of village republics as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi.

Another crucial aspect of Gandhi's thought was his insistence on ahimsa, or non-violence, as both a means and an end to development. For Gandhi, sustainable and equitable development could never be achieved through exploitation or caution. Sarvodaya movement has embraced this principle by fostering peace and reconciliation in communities divided by conflict.

As you all know, Sri Lanka was affected by a very violent armed conflict for more than 26 years. And Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement has been at the forefront of peace-building and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Through initiatives that promote interfaith dialogue, respect for diversity and communal harmony, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement has shown that development must be grounded in respect for human dignity and the peaceful resolution of differences.

Furthermore, Gandhi's approach to economic development was not one of unchecked industrialization but of balanced growth that respects the environment and prioritizes human needs. Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement's work in promoting sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and environmental conservation aligns closely with this vision, by focusing on small-scale, community-driven solutions that protect natural resources. While enhancing livelihoods, Sarvodaya exemplifies how development can be both equitable and ecologically sound.

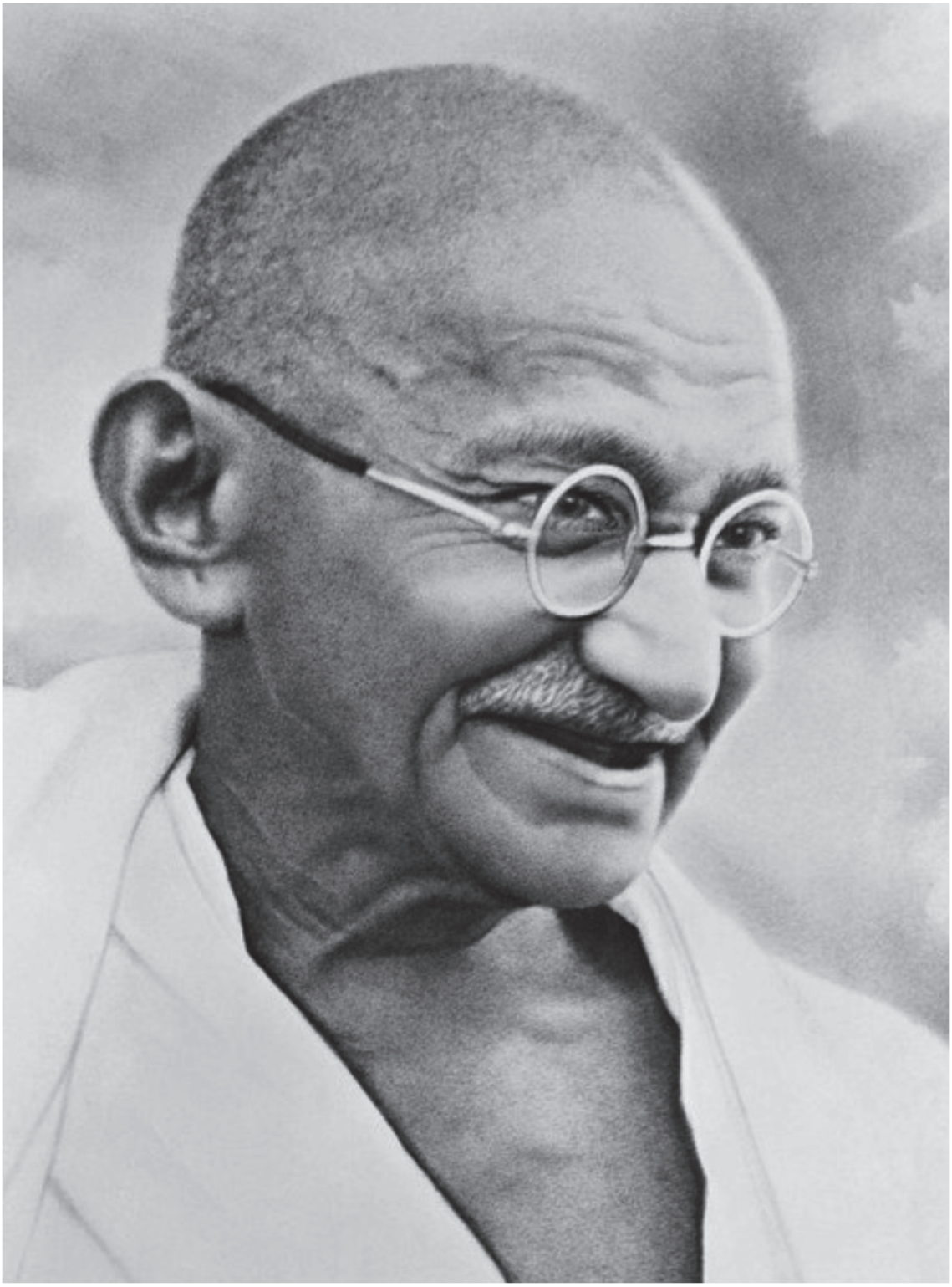
In a world where disparities continue to widen and ecological degradation threatens our future, the lessons from Gandhi and Sarvodaya are more relevant than ever. They remind us that development must be about more than just economic indicators. It must be about creating conditions where everyone can thrive, where resources are shared equitably,

and where growth does not come at the expense of our planet or our humanity. As we move forward, let us draw from these lessons to craft a development strategy that truly serves the common good.

Let us work toward a future where progress is measured not by the wealth of a few but by the well-being of all or what we call the awakening of all. Communities should be empowered. Compassion, fairness and sustainability should guide our every step. The relevance of Gandhi's principles and practice would be a topic for all time. In conclusion, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement serves as a beacon of hope, demonstrating that Gandhi's principles are not relics of the past, but vital tools for addressing the challenges of our time.

By embracing these ideals, we can build a world that is not only prosperous but just, not only sustainable but equitable. One way of welfare of every person is the true measure of our success.

Thank you.

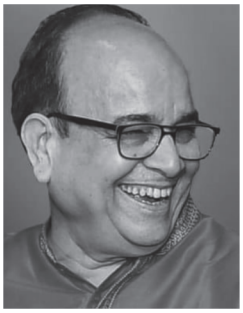


SESSION 3

GANDHI, DEMOCRACY AND DISSENT

ADDRESSING CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO PLURALISM, SECULARISM & DEMOCRACY

Prof. Jagadishwar Chaturvedi, Author and Peace Promoter, New Delhi



Mahatma Gandhi's recitation is necessary because both independence and democracy are under threat in India. When Gandhi wrote his works, these two were the fundamental goals he sought to achieve through his political and social movements. At that time, British imperialism and feudalism represented the greatest challenges, both of which kept the country in political and social subjugation. British colonial powers were focused on maintaining India's political slavery, while the Indian feudal powers and religious revivalists were intent on preserving social slavery.

Mahatma Gandhi set the goal of achieving both independence and democracy, and he succeeded in some measure. The country was freed from British political slavery, and in the process, a new democratic tradition emerged—one that involved public agitation on political and social issues. Alongside this, various dialogues and interactions with independence movements, revolutionary thinkers, and socialist currents began. These interactions played a crucial role in shaping political pluralism, which became the lifeblood of modern India. It helped establish socio-cultural, religious, and political pluralism as the core culture and ideology of the country.

However, today, we face new challenges posed by multinational corporations, corporate houses, and socio-religious revivalists—forces that oppose and threaten pluralism, secularism, and democracy. Although India has a constitution and constitutional institutions, they often remain inactive or under attack, unable to effectively address the problems facing the people. In such a situation, Mahatma Gandhi's perspective can offer more guidance than Marx-Lenin in helping us confront these challenges.

In the current period, the only way to safeguard democracy is through people's movements. It is not enough to rely solely on debates or media propaganda to protect democratic values. Four essential elements are required to fuel a meaningful movement. The first is a deep and unyielding desire for freedom, a yearning that must drive the people. The second element is the unity of the people; it is crucial that they come together, unified in their purpose. The third is non-violence, rooted in love and respect for others, which must be the foundation of the movement. Finally, participants must be prepared to sacrifice everything for the cause—not just their personal freedoms, property, or money, but also the freedom, wealth, and property of their families.

Without these four principles, neither independence nor democracy can be preserved. None of them can be compromised. Just as British imperialism was defeated when these principles were fully realized, today's threats to democracy—such as attacks on secularism, constitutional rights, and human rights—demand a renewed mass movement. A movement akin to the broad participation seen in the farmers' protests, where over 34 farmers' organizations came together last year, is necessary to protect and restore the values of democracy in our times.

For many years, a reactionary group of students has been intensifying a poisonous propaganda campaign against the democratic student movement. This campaign has been fueled by the misuse of media and social media platforms. In this context, they have chosen JNU as the ideal target for their reactionary attack, launching an all-out assault on the university. Their aim was to destroy the reputation of JNU, target its students and teachers—especially those who align with left-liberal ideologies—and smear them with accusations, portraying them as a divisive gang.

However, JNU students have long been known for their non-violent approach to student movements, following the methods outlined by Mahatma Gandhi. Their protests and actions reflect the Gandhian principles of non-violence and peaceful resistance. The true intent behind these attacks was to discourage students across the country from participating in democratic student movements. By maligning the largest university for higher education, they sought to foster hatred toward scientific education, delegitimize higher education, and create animosity against democratic, leftist, and liberal values among students.

This situation reminds us of a speech delivered by Mahatma Gandhi on 1 February 1928, when he addressed students at Gujarat University. Gandhi emphasized the importance of disciplined, non-disruptive activism, stating, "I have come here among you, and in that regard, I have come here to do something like Caesar. But by saying this, I do not wish for people's lives to be disordered either." This quote highlights Gandhi's vision of engaging in constructive action while maintaining harmony and peace within society.

“I want to be a friend, not a burden among you. If you wish for guidance, I can teach you two classes every day for 15 minutes a week. What will I teach you? I leave that up to you." Gandhi's belief lay in empowering students to take ownership of their learning and development. His approach was one of humility and encouragement, offering guidance without imposing his own agenda.

Gandhi firmly believed that students held the key to swaraj (self-rule), social reform, and the protection of religion. He saw students not only as future leaders but as active participants in the socio-political transformation of

society. In an article in Navjeevan dated 5 February 1928, Gandhi wrote, "Just as students hold the key to self-government, they also carry the key to social reform and the protection of religion in their pockets."

A few days ago, a gentleman hosted a fraternity party to celebrate his mother's birthday. Prior to the event, there was a significant discussion among the youth regarding certain customs associated with the occasion. One of the key points of contention was that the celebrant would not sit and eat with teachers and elders during the feast. Additionally, there was a movement among the students to fast in protest against this tradition. A total of 285 students participated in the fast, despite being threatened by local people who warned them that they would lose their scholarships and be evicted from their hostels or rented accommodations. Nevertheless, the students stood firm in their resolve.

The core purpose of this protest was to unite the student movement of India around the cause of social reform. Until now, social reform has not been a prominent part of the student movement. However, it is clear that for democracy to flourish and for the development of a democratic citizenry, social reform must be integrated into political action. Without implementing social reforms, democracy becomes hollow. A major reason why our democracy has faltered is the lack of substantial social reforms, which have allowed systems of inequality, casteism, and corruption to persist.

The student movement must take responsibility for addressing these issues. From the extravagance seen in banquets to the deeply entrenched issues of caste and dowry, these practices are stains on the democratic fabric of our nation. In this context, Gandhi once wrote, "Whoever gives a feast misuses his wealth and sets a bad example for the poor. God has given wealth to the rich so that they should use it for charity. They should understand that feasting on the occasion of marriage or Shraddha is at the expense of the poor. They should also know how many poor people have been ruined by this bad stereotype." Gandhi's perspective was clear: the wealth of the affluent should serve the greater good, and social reforms should replace wasteful and unjust practices.

In this context, Gandhiji raised an important question about the mindset of the old class, which clings to outdated traditions and practices without considering their impact on societal progress. He questioned how long they would continue to be slaves to tradition instead of viewing it as a tool for the advancement of society or the nation. How long would they prevent their children from acquiring knowledge and utilizing it for the betterment of society? This was a call for awakening and reform, urging people to think critically about the role of tradition and knowledge in shaping a progressive future.

Gandhi's use of non-violent strategies like boycotts during India's independence movement was pivotal. Boycotts were a powerful tool in demonstrating social integration, anti-imperialism, and social solidarity. Gandhi understood that casteism and entrenched humanistic orthodoxy were major forces used by society, particularly against the marginalized, including Dalits. Boycotts, therefore, became a tool of resistance, a means to create unity and force change through collective action.

However, the weapon of ostracism, though effective in resisting social injustices, has also been misused in other contexts. It is important to note that anti-social forces, communal groups, separatists, and terrorist organizations have exploited this tactic for negative

purposes. The question arises: why and how did these forces succeed in using ostracism as a weapon? One reason could be that the emotional appeal of exclusion and the ability to create a sense of unity within a particular group has been manipulated by such forces. Ostracism, in these cases, becomes a divisive tool, rather than a means of promoting democratic values and social harmony.

Gandhi wrote, "To refrain from accepting service is a non-violent boycott, but to refuse to provide service is a violent boycott. Not eating at the house of the ostracized, not engaging with them, not seeking their help, not attending their family events like marriages, and refraining from any involvement with them constitutes non-violent renunciation."

"If the ostracized person falls ill, refusing to care for them, not allowing a doctor to visit, not helping with funeral rites if they pass away, or denying them access to resources like wells and temples constitutes violent boycott."

On the subject of violence, Gandhi stated, "Just as violence is needed to take possession of any object, so too is violence required to sustain the body, no matter how minimal it may be."

Those who believe that Mahatma Gandhi was never in favor of violence are oversimplifying his thoughts. For Gandhi, the context and circumstances of violence and non-violence were critical. Gandhi wrote, “A bloody struggle is a transitional phase between freedom and the current state of affairs, and it is often necessary. However, one must face this phase as an inevitable part of the journey toward freedom. It should certainly be considered better than the state that is merely outwardly good but conceals pure violence under a long, white cloak.”

In Young India (26-2-1928), Gandhi wrote on "Anarchy versus Misrule": “Anarchy means the absence of governance or order. From misrule or disorder, which may be given the sacred name of governance or order, real governance or order cannot directly arise. However, governance or order can, and often does, emerge from anarchy or absence of governance."

"My view is that this governance is a pure evil and, therefore, no good can come from it. I consider misrule worse than the absence of governance."

“I desire neither the current governance nor anarchy.”

In the context of education, Gandhi made a profound observation. Highlighting the difference between the education of Hitler-Mussolini and the Congress's education policy, he wrote:

“We need to transform this training school into an institution through which we can achieve independence and eradicate all our evils, including our communal conflicts, once and for all. For this, we must focus entirely on non-violence. The primary objective of Hitler and Mussolini's schools is violence. But our purpose, according to Congress, is non-violence. Therefore, we must solve all our problems through non-violence. We will view our mathematics, science, and history only from the perspective of non-violence, and the issues related to these subjects will be imbued with the essence of non-violence.”

Gandhi believed that non-violence should be applied to "all internal questions and issues as well." He stated: “True and active non-violence will only be achieved when it gives birth to a living unity between Hindus and Muslims. This unity must not be based on fear, as was the case with the agreement between Hitler and Mussolini.

While delivering a speech at Islamia

College in Peshawar, Mahatma Gandhi said, “If a considerable amount of education is required for the method of violence, then even more education is needed for non-violence. And this education is far more difficult than the education for violence. The first essential requirement for this education is a living faith in God. A person who believes in God will never commit a wrong act while taking God's name. Such a person will rely not on the sword but solely on God.”

He further added, “Having a living faith in God means considering all humanity as one's brethren. It also implies having equal respect for all religions.” Gandhi emphasized, “The third essential is the acceptance of truth and purity.”

Ram Mandir and Mahatma Gandhi

While laying the foundation for a Ram temple dedicated to the marginalized in Vartej, Bhavnagar, Mahatma Gandhi made profoundly significant remarks:

"When Hindus serve the marginalized (antyajas), they are not doing a favor to them but to themselves. It is the Hindus who are responsible for making their brothers, referred to as antyajas, marginalized, and for this sin, whatever atonement or expiation they do is not enough."

A temple is not merely a structure made of marble and bricks, nor is it defined solely by the installation of an idol within it. Performing a havan and ceremonially inaugurating a temple with the presence of a Brahmin can also amount to mere pretense. True temple building requires those who undertake it to commit their lives to atonement from the moment they resolve to construct it. Equally important is the character of the priests, as they must embody purity and integrity. Without self-purification and pure thoughts, a so-called temple is nothing more than a house—a burden on the earth, not a sacred space.

In his famous essay "Suffering in the Name of Devotion" (Navjeevan, 6-5-1928), Mahatma Gandhi strongly criticized the hypocrisy and indulgent mentality spreading in society under the guise of devotion. With the inspiration and support of Jay Dayal Goenka, Govind Bhavan was constructed in Calcutta, where regular bhajan sessions were held. Around that time, the Marwari community saw the rise of many such devotional groups.

However, an incident occurred in Govind Bhavan that Gandhi reflected upon with stern words. A man hired to perform bhajans misused his position to engage in immoral acts, committing adultery under the pretext of devotion. Gandhi remarked, "He exploited devotion, feeding his lustful desires while claiming to worship God. He led women astray and committed disgraceful acts in the name of bhakti. Such incidents should not be ignored."

"This incident is unfortunate, but it does not surprise me. Hypocrisy in the name of devotion is widespread. When the essence of true devotion is misunderstood, it is hardly surprising that unrighteousness manifests in the guise of religion. It would be more shocking if deceit in the name of devotion did not yield negative consequences."

Gandhi remarked, "I revere the name of Ram and the twelve mantras, but my worship is not blind. If rooted in truth, the name of Ram becomes a vessel for salvation. However, I do not believe that a hypocrite who chants the name of Ram can be saved." He added, "Anyone who manipulates the name of Ram for selfish gains does not ascend; they sink."

In this context, Gandhi emphasized two critical points. First, true devotion is not merely chanting names but requires continuous selfless effort and sacrifice. There

is a growing misconception that worldly actions have no connection to religion or devotion, which is entirely false. No one works solely to earn money—good actions are integral to life. Devotion must come from speech, mind, and body. If any one element is lacking, like an imbalance in a chemical formula, the intended result cannot be achieved. Unfortunately, today's devotees often limit devotion to eloquent speech, leading to moral corruption.

Gandhi also directed a message to women: "A man who worships himself is corrupt. But why do women allow themselves to become complicit in this? If sisters must revere someone, why not honor an exemplary woman? Why choose to venerate a flawed living man instead?"

"If one must worship a person, it should be after their death, for then we honor their virtues."

GANDHI'S RELEVANCE TO DEMOCRACY

Justice H.N. Nagamohan Das, Former Judge, High Court of Karnataka

I feel privileged to stand before you on this special occasion. In the next two minutes, I would like to share a personal story that holds deep meaning for me. We are honored to have Tushar Gandhi with us today. While he is known as the great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, I too share a unique connection to Gandhi through my name, "Mohan Das." Let me explain how this came about.

In 1947, India gained its independence, and just a few months later, on 30th January 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was tragically assassinated. In the aftermath of his death, the Congress Party passed a resolution to carry Gandhi's ashes to every district in the country. Programs were organized in these districts where the ashes were immersed in rivers, lakes, oceans, or wells.

In 1952, the event took place in Kolar district, Karnataka, near Kolar Gold Fields (KGF), at a village called Bethamangala, which had a large tank (lake). Local freedom fighter Nagappa played a leading role in organizing the event, setting up camp for five days at the venue. On 12th February 1952, a gathering took place near the lake, and Gandhi's ashes were immersed in its waters.

During the program, a bus conductor and driver arrived at the venue with a message for Nagappa—he had become a father to a baby boy. The leaders present suggested naming the child "Gandhi" in honor of the great leader. However, Nagappa respectfully declined, explaining that in their family, the firstborn child traditionally had a name starting with the letter 'N.' And so, I was named "Naga" (a family name) and "Mohan Das" (inspired by Gandhi).

This anecdote serves as a reminder of Gandhi's profound and enduring influence. In 1952, Gandhi's legacy had already touched countless lives, and it continues to inspire generations today, just as it will for years to come.

Gandhi is not only Tushar Gandhi's great-grandfather but also a figure of immense inspiration for millions across India and the world.

Friends, as we delve into the pages of history, we can identify five significant stages in the evolution of human society. The first stage is the Primitive Communal System, followed by the Slave System. The third stage is the Feudal System, the fourth is the Democratic System, and the fifth is the Socialist System.

Today, 90% of countries are governed by democratic systems, including India. We gained independence in 1947, and by adopting the world's largest written Constitution, we became a Republic in 1950. Our Constitution abolished feudalism and laid the foundation for parliamentary democracy in India. Over the past 75 years, we have built democratic institutions, introduced democratic reforms, and granted our people democratic rights.

The Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies serve as our legislative institutions. The Central Government, State Governments, District Administrations, Taluka Administrations, and Gram Panchayats function as executive institutions. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court, High Courts, District Courts, and Taluka Courts constitute our judicial institutions. These democratic institutions, established after India became a Republic, engage the participation of the country's 140 crore population, both directly and indirectly, in their day-to-day operations.

During this time, we have introduced various reforms to enhance the living conditions of our people. These include agricultural reforms, educational reforms, industrial reforms, administrative reforms, health reforms, cultural reforms, and land reforms. Through these efforts, we have continually worked towards improving the quality of life for the people of our nation.

We have provided the people with democratic rights, including freedom of speech and expression, freedom to travel, freedom of residence, freedom to choose a profession or occupation, freedom of religion, and freedom to preserve and promote their culture. For several decades, we have enjoyed these fundamental rights. However, today, democracy in India is facing significant problems and challenges.

This issue is not confined to India alone; it is a global phenomenon. Across the world, democratic political systems are showing cracks. Be it in America, England, Germany, France, Australia, or India—name any country, and you'll find similar struggles. In India, our democratic political system currently faces issues such as terrorism, communalism, corruption, criminalization, and cultural degeneration. These are the challenges the Political system is facing today and democratic institutions are being weakened.

Institutions like the Parliament, legislative bodies, and independent entities such as the Election Commission, Reserve Bank, and Enforcement Directorate have seen their sovereignty eroded. Rampant violations of human rights, often by the state itself, add to the list of concerns. Fundamental constitutional features like secularism, social justice, welfare state principles, pluralism, and federalism are being misinterpreted, and in some cases, rendered irrelevant.

When adopting the Constitution, we resolved to end the rule of kings and embrace the rule of law. Yet, day by day, the rule of law is being eroded across various fields. Elections, which are the cornerstone of democracy, have come under the influence of money power, muscle power, caste power, and religious power, further weakening democratic governance.

This crisis is not limited to India—it is a challenge for democracies worldwide. However, amidst these challenges, a critical question remains unanswered: What is the alternative to democracy? Despite the numerous political analysts in countries like America, France, England, and India, nobody has put forth a viable alternative. While democracy faces these problems and challenges, no serious discussion is happening about possible alternatives or solutions. It is a pressing issue we must confront, both as a nation and as part of the global democratic community.

In my humble opinion, Gandhi's relevance is more profound today than ever before. While I am not advocating for blind acceptance of everything Gandhi said, I strongly believe it is time to debate and deliberate on how Gandhian values can be incorporated to strengthen our present democratic system and address its shortcomings.

As far back as the 1930s, Gandhi warned not just India but the entire world, stating, "The greater the institution, the greater the abuse." Democracy, as one of the largest institutions today, is unfortunately experiencing significant abuse. In such a scenario, isn't it essential for us to revisit and discuss Gandhi's conception of non-violence as a principle rooted in justice for all, rights for all, and equality for all?

This is the conversation we need to have: how to embed these Gandhian principles into our democratic framework to create a system that truly serves everyone.

Similarly, Gandhi's concept of Sarvodaya - the upliftment and liberation of all—holds immense relevance today. This morning, I heard the Chief Minister remark that 85% of the country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of just 1% of the population. This staggering economic disparity has led to widespread hunger, poverty, unemployment, begging, illiteracy, and a severe lack of essential facilities like healthcare and shelter.

Gandhi proposed trusteeship as a solution to such inequality. The principle of trusteeship is rooted in the idea that we should work and live with a sense of responsibility. Gandhi emphasized that we should earn and utilize only what is minimally required for our living. What should we do with the rest of our earnings? Gandhi urged us to share it with those in need—those who are unable to sustain themselves. This principle of trusteeship has largely been forgotten in today's society.

Gandhi also advocated Swaraj, which is not about the concentration of power in one individual or entity but about decentralization. In one of my judgments, I quoted Gandhi on the importance of decentralization, emphasizing that democracy does not mean governance dictated solely from Delhi. True democracy requires governance that emerges from every village, ensuring participation at the grassroots level. This is the essence of Swaraj and a fundamental tenet of democracy.

We often engage in debates about our rights but seldom reflect on the importance of discharging our duties. This is the essence of the Gandhian way of living—not merely claiming rights but also fulfilling our responsibilities. Gandhi firmly believed that rights and duties are inseparable. However, in the past 75 years, we have primarily focused on rights, neglecting the discharge of our duties.

What is more critical, yet often forgotten, is the role of our education, social, and family systems in building a value-based society. If you ask what value or morality truly means, it might be challenging to define, but it's easy to

illustrate. Let me share two examples to explain.

Example 1: Field Marshal K.C. Cariappa and Ayub Khan

During the Indo-Pak war, Pakistan captured Indian Air Marshal K.C. Cariappa along with his associates. At the time, Ayub Khan, the President of Pakistan, had previously served under Field Marshal K.M. Cariappa, the Air Marshal's father. Ayub Khan wrote a letter to K.M. Cariappa, informing him that his son was in their custody and being treated well. Ayub Khan even offered to release his son as a gesture of goodwill.

Field Marshal Cariappa replied, thanking him for his kindness but declined special treatment for his son. He insisted that his son be treated like any other captured soldier and should be released along with them, stating that all the captured soldiers were like his own sons. This act exemplifies Gandhian values—selflessness, fairness, and morality.

Example 2: Justice H.R. Khanna's Stand for Fundamental Rights

During the Emergency in 1975, fundamental rights were suspended, censorship was imposed, and opposition leaders were arrested. Numerous habeas corpus petitions were filed, challenging the suspension of rights. While four judges of the Supreme Court ruled that fundamental rights could be suspended during an emergency, Justice H.R. Khanna dissented, stating that fundamental rights are intrinsic to the Constitution and cannot be suspended, even in times of crisis.

Despite being the senior-most judge and eligible to become the Chief Justice of India, Justice Khanna was bypassed by the government, and a junior judge was appointed instead. Justice Khanna resigned in protest, upholding his principles and the Constitution over personal ambition. An American judge, Justice Jackson, later remarked, "Judges are more often bribed not by money but by loyalty to others." Justice Khanna's decision to stand for people's rights, even at great personal cost, is a powerful example of morality in action.

Gandhi's Relevance to Democracy

These examples highlight the values Gandhi advocated throughout his life selflessness, morality, and adherence to duty. Gandhi prescribed these values in every aspect of life, emphasizing the need for non-violence, trusteeship, duties, Swaraj, and Gram Raj (village self-rule).

Even today, the challenges facing democracy can be traced to the erosion of these values. To strengthen Indian democracy and overcome its current disadvantages, it is essential to revisit these Gandhian ideals. We need to debate and deliberate on how these principles can be integrated into our political system to create a just, equitable, and value-driven society.

The question arises: What is dissent? There can be no democracy without dissent. Dissent is the cornerstone of a vibrant democracy. In 2010, I had the occasion to write a judgment reflecting on how our democracy has not only established democratic institutions and reforms but has also granted us democratic rights. One such right is the freedom of speech and expression.

Freedom of speech and expression means the freedom to express one's views, the freedom to dissent from others' views, the freedom to question authority, the freedom to criticize policies, the freedom to analyze decisions, and even the freedom to remain silent. Questioning and criticizing authority are not new concepts in human civilization. From the times of Charvaka, Buddha, and Basava, dissent has been central to intellectual and

societal progress. This freedom to question and critique is essential to the health of any democracy.

However, today, speaking out often comes with labels. If you raise your voice, you might be branded a "Pakistani," an "anti-national," an "urban Naxalite," or "anti-Hindu." This climate of labeling and suppression stifles the very spirit of democracy. Unless we open our mouths, raise our voices, and dissent constructively, democracy cannot be strengthened. This task cannot be accomplished by a few individuals; the entire nation must stand united to protect democratic values.

This is precisely why Gandhi becomes even more relevant today. Gandhi embodied dissent through peaceful, constructive criticism and civil disobedience. He spent over 299 days in jail, not for personal gain, but for criticizing British rule and inspiring people to resist unjust laws. His sacrifices paved the way for India's independence.

The question we must ask ourselves is this: Can we not make similar sacrifices to save democracy today? Can we not risk inconvenience, even imprisonment, to stand against injustice, misgovernance, propaganda, and anti-constitutional acts?

To protect and strengthen democracy, we need to follow Gandhi's path of constructive dissent. Gandhi's methods of peaceful resistance and unwavering commitment to truth and justice are not just relevant to Indian democracy but hold significance for democracies across the world. In times when dissent is under threat, Gandhi's teachings remind us that it is our duty to question, criticize, and act—peacefully but firmly—to uphold democratic ideals.

GANDHI, DEMOCRACY AND DISSENT

Dr. Siby Joseph, Director, Sri Jamnalal Bajaj Memorial Library and Research Centre for Gandhian Studies, Sevagram Ashram Pratishthan, Wardha

The systems of governance which we witness today in most parts of the globe are the result of continuous evolution and adaptation through ages. Democratic polity started with limited franchise and ultimately resulted in universal adult franchise. It also witnessed the transition of an idea of a minimal state to the welfare state in which the government plays a more proactive role in promoting social welfare and addressing the various issues confronted by people. These transitions radically changed the entire character of democratic governance all over the world. Among the existing patterns of democracy, liberal democracy with representative government has become its most dominant form practiced in the world today. In a liberal democratic system, the people are considered to be the ultimate source of authority and the government derives its power from their consent. Based on the basic principle of representation, citizens elect their represen-tatives assuming that they will take decisions which represent the will and aspirations of the people. It is assumed that such a system would ensure accountability and transparency through mechanisms like independent judiciary ensuring rule of law to all citizens, free press raising voice against arbitrary and authoritarian tendencies and free and transparent decision making process. It is also expected that people's power is exercised through various means like voting, participating in public debates, engaging in peaceful protests, exercising the right to information and holding elected representatives accountable.

However, the fact of the matter is that existing patterns of democracy suffer from certain corrosive structures and forces that hamper the flourishing of

democracy in the desired direction. There is a large disconnect between the people and their representatives, particularly the poor and marginalized sections of society. They were not given any space to voice their opinions or ventilate their grievances. Literally they were kept out of the entire process of deliberation and decision making process thereby resulting in unequal representation and growing inequality in the democratic process. The rich, elitists and powerful corporate bodies and their interest groups exert undue influence on the decision process catering to their vested interest. They often finance the election campaigns and their lobbying corrupts the entire system of governance. Even the entire process of lawmaking and policy decisions were made to ensure the control and dominance of these groups in the existing socio, economic and political order. These groups were indulged in acts of corruption and silenced the voices acting against them. Citizens may feel disconnected and alienated from the political process of governance. This is one of the reasons for voter apathy and low turnout in the elections.

Liberal democracies are found to be vulnerable to authoritarian and dictatorial tendencies of the leader of the ruling party. This led to the usage of the term viz. 'machine politicians' [1] who are more interested in personal gains and power than public service. They are controlled and influenced by special interest groups in politics. They use patronage and cronyism to maintain power and engage in corrupt and unethical practices. Since these defects are inherent in the existing patterns of democracy right from the local to the international level, various efforts are being taken to provide scope for popular participation in law-making as well as other processes of decision-making. This called for the inclusion of alternative avenues outside the conventional institutions of representative democracy in which citizens could really articulate their views, participate in the decision-making and ensure citizens participation in the law making process. The recent resurgence in discourses on delibe-rative democracy is one of such attempts to make democracy more people oriented by giving them the opportunity to participate in public discourse.[2] It focused on non-state sites as fruitful locations for deliberation and the concept of public sphere. However, it hardly challenged the centralized power of the state or the dominance of the rich and powerful who control the whole process of governance.

Here comes the significance of Gandhi's alternative system of decentralized form of democratic governance in which the fulcrum of power actually remained with the people. That is why Ramin Jahanbegloo described Gandhi as one of the most significant and relevant non-Western theorist of democracy. [3] However he admits the fact that though Gandhian non-violence has captured the attention of many civic actors and democratic theorists around the world for a quite long time, his vision of democracy is still missing from most Western debates in democratic theory.[4] He uses the term “integral democracy” to describe Gandhi's alternative model of democracy which was altogether different from the dominant liberal democracy based on representative government. Further in nutshell he explains Gandhi's concept. “In Gandhi's “integral democracy,” there would be no representative government, no capitalist greed, and certainly no social and political hierarchy. In many ways, Gandhi's advocacy of citizenship duty and his insistence on democracy's ethical renewal in terms of character building (people leadership) and enlightened citizenship (democratic passion)

is first and foremost a response to what he took to be certain enduring tensions between spirituality and politics and individual and state in Western liberal political life."[5]

Gandhi in his seminal work Hind Swaraj, which he wrote in 1909, had vehemently criticized the basic notion of political representation which was the mainstay of western liberal democracy. He argued that the elected members prioritize personal interests over the public good. They were driven by fear and self-preservation rather than altruism. Their work was largely ineffective, and decisions were frequently reversed. Party discipline leads them to mindless voting; stifling independent thought processes. The very system was wasteful, inefficient, and ineffective. [6]

Gandhi's strong critique goes far beyond the British Parliament-which he described as a 'sterile woman' and 'prostitute'[7] to the very concept of representative democracy itself, drawing its inherent flaws and weaknesses. According to him Western industrial civilization and its liberal democracy were highly materialistic, individualistic, competitive and centralized. Further it was very much disconnected from traditional values and neglected the spiritual dimension of human existence. It was very much imperialistic in its nature and justified colonialism and exploitation under the guise of "civilizing" others.

Gandhi's critique of Western civilization and bringing into limelight the inadequacies of liberal democracy was not a rejection of democracy itself, but rather a call for a more holistic, inclusive, and spiritually grounded approach to governance based on a true civilization. He said "There is no human institution but has its dangers. The greater the institution the greater the chances of abuse. Democracy is a great institution and therefore it is liable to be greatly abused. The remedy, therefore, is not avoidance of democracy but reduction of possibility of abuse to a minimum."[8] He advocated a more direct, participatory, and morally grounded approach to democratic governance, as outlined in his vision of Swaraj.

In Hind Swaraj, Gandhi talks about a village oriented mode of life and governance based on the traditional wisdom of India. He was of the view that in India our ancestors managed their lives and affairs by themselves without much outside interference. Gandhi used the terms inner swaraj and outer swaraj to explain his schemata or vision of swaraj. He was of the opinion that higher the level of inner Swaraj, the need for outer Swaraj will be minimal. His ideal vision was a state of enlightened anarchy or self rule. As a practical idealist he never rejected the importance of outer swaraj.

In 1921, Gandhi in his new preface to Hind Swaraj, admitted the fact that as the people of India at the present state of social development were not willing to accept and work towards his concept of inner Swaraj.[9] Given the situation even though he was individually working for self-rule, his corporate activity was devoted to the attainment of Parliamentary Swaraj. At the same time, he was convinced that people's liberty and freedom can be ensured only through decentralization power. He was of the view that centralization of power destroys the spirit of democracy and paves the way of corruption and exploitation. Thus he was highly critical of centralized state[10]. For him, it was nothing but as a living symbol of violence and domination. In his ideal scheme of things there was no place for state or political power. He said, "To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of

life. Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation become necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour." [11] As a pragmatist he believed that the ideal cannot be realized in life. He agreed with Henry David Thoreau that, that government is best which governs the least. [12] Thus he postulates the idea of a minimal state in which fruits of real democracy could be attained.

In order to attain the ideal of democracy he advocated self-sufficient and self-reliant communities in his ideal vision of "village swaraj." He wrote: My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. .... Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. ... My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour." [13] His scheme of governance was a bottom-up approach in which the people at the grassroots level would be real custodians of power and they would decide what power to be delegated to the higher echelons of authority. Through this he wanted to reverse the pyramid of authority or top-down approach of devolution of powers to the lower levels.

The government in his vision of swaraj would have consent of largest number of adults and real swaraj will be realized only when the people have capacity to resist, regulate and control authority when it is abused, Gandhi said " Real Swaraj will come, not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.[14]

His notion of swaraj is inextricably linked with his concept of Satyagraha . He looked at satyagraha as the means to achieve swaraj in which the individual through voluntary self-sacrifice and suffering challenges unjust political, social and economic structures marked by centralization. He visualized a predominantly nonviolent society and stressed the importance of nonviolence in democracy.[15] He was of the opinion that "Science of war leads one to dictatorship pure and simple. Science of nonviolence can alone lead one to pure democracy. "[16] He believed that democracy could only be saved through non-violence and so long as it is sustained by violence, it couldn't protect the interests of the

weak or marginalized. Gandhi was a great champion of the right to dissent. He was a source of inspiration for great dissenters, including individuals who faced authoritarianism and totalitarianism of an extreme kind, even in his lifetime . Dissenters, for instance, like the Soviet Union's Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and Nazi Germany's Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who in 1934 almost came to India to spend time with Gandhi.[17] Dissent was a natural act for him which can be applied to one's family including father and it was not something disrespectful irrespective of the fact that the other party may be father, friend or government. While doing resistance or disobeying a law repugnant to his conscience the course of action is an act of justice.[18] Mahatma through his life and actions successfully created a unique and creative form of dissent to challenge unjust laws and transform the society whether in India or South Africa through his satyagraha struggles. Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922) was nothing but a nationwide movement to dissent against British rule, encouraging Indians to boycott British goods, law courts, and government institutions.

Gandhi's Salt March was a classic example of dissent symbolically producing salt from sea water to protest the British salt tax, to protest against the oppressive law. Through individual Satyagraha (1940-1941) Gandhi encouraged selected individuals of high moral character to dissent against British rule. Quit India Movement of 1942 was Gandhi's final call for an end to British rule in India, leading to widespread civil disobedience and dissent against colonial authority. Gandhi successfully used dissent as a means to achieve a more just equitable and peaceful society both in South Africa and India demonstrating the power of non-violent dissent in achieving socio-economic and political change.

Gandhi's method of dissent was based on his philosophy of Satyagraha or nonviolent resistance. It was the most respectful form of dissent maintaining dignity and respect for opponents, even when there was strong disagreement. Another unique feature of his dissent was constructive creative dimension focusing on building alternative systems and institutions. Here combat and creation go hand in hand each contributing to the other. Romila Thapar in her book Voices of Dissent: An Essay wrote that "Gandhi created a variant form of dissent as others had done before him. The continuation of the right to dissent, to disagree, to debate can be seen in the varied manner in which it has been formulated. Satyagraha has been one effective form in recent times."[19] Speaking of the continuities of dissent, Romila Thapar said "let me bring the narrative up to present times and mention what I believe has been a deep echo and a contemporary version of the kind of dissent that we have frequently experienced in times not so long ago. In many ways, it takes forward the Gandhian satyagraha but in a different context."[20]

Ramin Jahanbegloo wrote "Gandhi's success as a universal gadfly goes far beyond his national stature as the founding father of modern India. As such, his universal message could be measured by his immense impact on all forms of dissent against unjust regimes — this includes India — in the past half-century. As such, Gandhi has become a part of the moral conscience of humanity. His name and achievements symbolise a sense of revolt against injustice. That is to say, a proper appreciation of Gandhi's relevance can only be made against the backdrop of his civic philosophy of dissent."[21] He titled his book as "The Disobedient Indian: Towards a Gandhian Philosophy of Dissent"[22]

To conclude I would like to quote from

Gandhi "A popular State can never act in advance of public opinion. If it goes against it, it will be destroyed. Democracy disciplined and enlightened is the finest thing in the world. A democracy prejudiced, ignorant, superstitious, will land itself in chaos and may be self-destroyed." [23]Therefore, it is the duty of all citizens who believe in democracy and rule of law to use the weapon of nonviolence Gandhi placed before us to act against authoritarian and fascist tendencies of the state. Let the words and actions of Mahatma inspire us to question and disobey unjust laws and institutions and contribute towards the creation of just and equitable world order which Gandhi dreamt.

Let us follow the path of the great dissenter based on non-violence to mobile people's power to save our democracy. The first step in this direction is to educate the people and create a conducive atmosphere to attain the true democratic aspirations of people at large. In this process they transform themselves from mere crowds to real citizens performing their duties to save democracy. When the people at large embrace the technique and methods of non-violence in their mission to achieve the prevalence of true democratic practices no force on earth can stop them. It would ultimately result in creation of a decentralized, participatory form of democracy in which the power of the State would be reduced to the minimum. In which every citizen would be acting in a responsible and disciplined manner performing his duties and enjoying rights in a vibrant democracy which respects the will and aspirations of people.

About the Author

Dr. Siby K. Joseph is an academic and Gandhian scholar having more than two decades of teaching and research experience. Formerly he was Dean of Studies and Research of Institute of Gandhian Studie, Wardha. He is currently serving as Director Sri Jamanlal Bajaj Memorial Library and Research Centre for Gandhian Studies of Sevagram Ashram Pratishthan Wardha, Maharashtra. He has a number of publications to his credit.

Notes and References

[1] According to Encyclopedia Britannica, political machine, especially in the context of U.S. politics, "a party organization, headed by a single boss or small autocratic group, that commands enough votes to maintain political and administrative control of a city, county, or state." https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-machine It is also defined as " an administration of elected public officials who use their influential positions to solidify and perpetuate the power of their political party, often through dubious means. Machine politicians make free use of the spoils system and patronage, rewarding loyal party supporters with appointed government jobs." https://www.dictionary.com/browse/political-machine

[2] See Siby K. Joseph, "Deliberative Democracy, public sphere and the search for alternative politics in India: Gandhian Contributions" in Deliberative Democracy Understanding the Indian Experience edited by Teresa Joseph , Siby K. Joseph (London : Routledge, 2018, pp. 59-74)

[3] Ramin Jahanbegloo "The Gandhian Vision of Democracy' Democratic Theory, Volume 2, Issue 2, Winter 2015, pp. 59–70.

[4] Ibid .

[5] Ibid .pp.59-60.

[6] Gandhi wrote in Hind Swaraj , "The best men are supposed to be elected by the people. The members serve without pay and therefore it must be assumed, only for the public weal. The electors are considered to be educated and therefore we should assume that they would not generally make mistakes in their choice. Such a Parliament should not need the spur of petitions or any other pressure. Its work should be so smooth that its effects would be more apparent day by day. But as a matter of fact, it is generally acknowledged that the members are hypocritical and selfish. Each thinks of his own little interest. It is fear that is the guiding motive. What is done today may be undone tomorrow. It is not possible to recall a single instance in which finality can be predicted for its work. When the greatest questions are debated its members have been seen to stretch themselves and to doze. Sometimes the members talk away until the listeners are

disgusted. Carlyle has called it the 'talking shop of the world'. Members vote for their party without a thought.Their so-called discipline binds them to it. If any member, by way of exception,gives an independent vote, he is considered a renegade. If the money and the time wasted by Parliament were entrusted to a few good men, the English nation would be occupying today a much higher platform. Parliament is simply a costly toy of the nation. These views are by no means peculiar to me. Some great English thinkers have expressed them. One of the members of that Parliament recently said that a true Christian could not become a member of it. Another said that it was a baby. And if it has remained a baby after an existence of seven hundred years,when will it outgrow its babyhood?"

[7] Gandhi wrote in Hind Swaraj "'That which you consider to be the Mother of Parliaments is like a sterile woman and a prostitute. Both these are harsh terms. But exactly fit the case. That Parliament has not yet, of its own accord, done a single good thing. Hence I have compared it to a sterile woman. The natural condition of that Parliament is such that, without outside pressure, it can do nothing. It is like a prostitute because it as under the control of ministers who change from time to time. Today it is under Mr. Asquith, tomorrow it may be under Mr. Balfour."

[8] M. K. Gandhi , Young India, 7-5-1931.

[9] Gandhi wrote in the Preface to the new edition of Hind Swaraj in 1921"My conviction is deeper today than ever.... But I would warn the reader against thinking that I am today aiming at the Swaraj described therein. I know that India is not ripe for it. It may seem an impertinence to say so. But such is my conviction. I am individually working for the self-rule pictured therein. But today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of Parliamentary Swaraj, in accordance with the wishes of the people of India."

[10] "The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.

I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of the progress.

We know of so many cases where men have adopted trusteeship, but nowhere the State has really lived for the poor."

Gandhi's interview with Nirmal Kumar Bose Nirmal Kumar Bose met Gandhi on November 9 and 10, 1934. The report was published after corrections by Gandhi.

[11] M. K. Gandhi , Young India, 2-7-1931

[12] Ibid .

[13] M. K. Gandhi ,Harijan, 26-7-1942.

[14] M. K. Gandhi , Young India , 29-1-1925.

[15] The Government cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-violent, because it represents all the people. I do not today conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a predominantly nonviolent society. And I am working for it. M. K. Gandhi , Harijan, 9-3-1940.

[16] M. K. Gandhi , Harijan 15-10-1938.

[17] Rajmohan Gandhi,"Gandhi, the champion of the right to dissent", Mint , 1 Oct 2019, https://www.livemint.com/news/india/gandhi-the-champion-of-the-right-to-dissent-11569937809153.html

[18] If I find that even my father has imposed upon me a law which is repugnant to my conscience, I think it is the least drastic course that I could adopt by respectfully telling him that I cannot obey it. By that course I do nothing but justice to my father... I have myself followed that course with the greatest advantage and I have preached that ever since. If it is not disrespectful to say so to my father, it is not so to say so to a friend and for that matter to my Government. M. K. Gandhi, Young India, 21-1-1920.

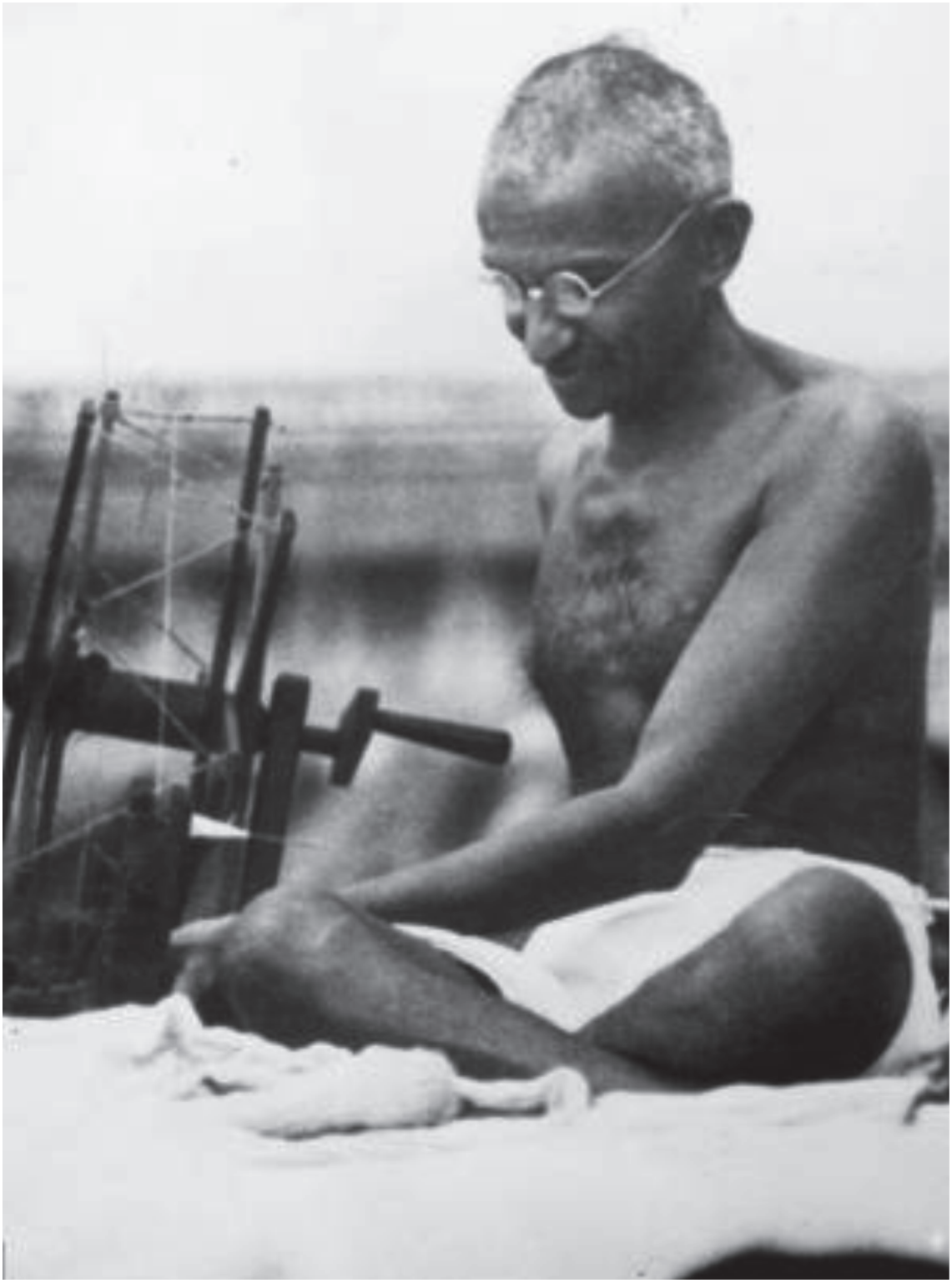
[19] Romila Thapar, Voices of Dissent: An Essay (Calcutta: Seagull Books ,2020) p.140.

[20] Ibid . p.147.

[21] Ramin Jahanbegloo, Gandhi for Our Troubled Times https://jgu.edu.in/blog/2017/01/30/gandhi-for-our-troubled-times/.

[22] Ramin Jahanbegloo ,The Disobedient Indian: Towards a Gandhian Philosophy of Dissent,(New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Books , 2018)

[23] M. K. Gandhi, Young India, 30-7-1931.

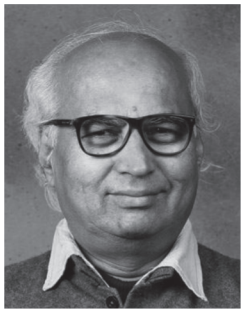


SESSION 4

GANDHIAN VALUES AND THE REVOLUTIONARY POWER OF TECHNOLOGY: IS A SYNTHESIS POSSIBLE?

GANDHIAN TECHNOLOGY FOR A NEW CIVILIZATION

Mr. Sudheendra Kulkarni, Columnist and Author of 'The Music of the Spinning Wheel'



My thanks to the organizers of this seminar, Dr. Wooday Krishna ji, Mr. Vishukumar ji and others for inviting me to participate in this. As we all know, the overall theme of this seminar is Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st century. The values that Gandhiji stood for actually go well beyond the 21st century. They are timeless.

Truth, non-violence, universal brotherhood, universal justice, mutual cooperation, mutual compassion and love. These are as old as human species. Gandhiji himself has written that truth and non-violence, satya and ahimsa, are as old as hills. They are timeless. And these will last as long as the human species lasts and perhaps beyond. Because ours is not the last species in the evolution of life.

We should not be under the illusion that today's human beings are the pinnacle, the last point of evolution of human species. There is something far better, far superior that's going to succeed us. And even then, Gandhiji's values will be relevant and they will continue to guide the next species that will follow human species.

The theme of this session, friends, is Gandhian values and the revolutionary power of technology. Is a consensus possible? Now, this discussion is being held in Bengaluru. Bengaluru is an ancient place of science. But this discussion is even more current.

My thoughts on this subject are based on my book, which was mentioned in the introduction, Music of the Spinning Wheel, Mahatma Gandhi's Manifesto for the Internet Age. I should explain briefly why I wrote this book.

There is a widespread misconception that Gandhiji was opposed to science, technology, industrialization and modernity in general. This perception of Gandhiji, stems largely from the fact that his personality and his philosophy are associated with the spinning wheel. If we think of

Gandhiji, the first image that comes to our mind is his charkha. Now, my own friend, Sanjeev, he is also working on the same principle. For those who have seen this, Gandhiji, who worked on the charkha, in today's modern medical science and tantric science era, how can Gandhiji be relevant in today's age of science and technology? This is the question that several people ask.

We all know what Winston Churchill, the arrogant leader of the empire, said about Gandhiji. He called him a half-naked fakir. Ardha Nanga Fakir. What he meant was, how can this half-naked fakir, belonging to the middle ages, claim to be leading the independence movement of a nation, which the British regarded as the crown of their empire?

Friends, being a student of technology myself, a serious question comes to my mind. How can a man, howsoever great in his own time, be relevant in our technological age, if he was opposed to modern science and technology? Our age, as we all know, is uniquely defined by the mighty advances in science and technology. And if Gandhiji was indeed opposed to modern science and technology, it means that in some crucial ways, he belongs to the past, and not to the present, and much less to the future of humanity.

In other words, in this age of the Internet, in the age of revolutionary advances in artificial intelligence, Gandhiji with his spinning wheel, Gandhiji who advocated revival of village industries, is certainly anachronistic, indisputably outdated. But is this really true? How can Gandhiji be relevant to our age as an apostle of peace, non-violence and religious harmony, and yet be irrelevant on the parameter of science and technology which distinguishes our age from all the previous eras in human history?

This is the question that confronted me. The more I studied this subject, the more I got convinced that Gandhiji was far from being an opponent of science, technology and modernity. Indeed, my second discovery in my study of Gandhiji led me to another interesting, even amazing understanding that the philosophy of the spinning wheel has something close to the revolutionary power of the Internet. You might wonder, what kinship can there possibly be between the modest spinning wheel which occupies the primitive end of the technological spectrum and the Internet which occupies the most advanced technological offering of the human mind?

So before I proceed further with my talk, friends, I would like to show you a short film that encapsulates the main theme of my book. It's only six minutes. May I request our friends there to show it to us, and if possible, kindly dim the lights.

[Video plays, consisting of images, music, and captions, but very little speech.]

A just, peaceful and beautiful NEW WORLD is being born ...

A world that Mahatma Gandhi had envisioned ...

A vision that will be realised by the INTERNET, an avatar of the Spinning Wheel.

'For my material needs, my Village is my World

For my spiritual needs, the World is my Village.' - Mahatma Gandhi

Music of the Spinning Wheel: Mahatma Gandhi's Manifesto for the INTERNET AGE. Sudheendra Kulkarni

Dedicated to Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee

My five principal endeavors in this book ...

1. To remove the widespread misconception that Gandhiji was opposed to Science, Technology, and Modernity.

2. To revive the 'Khadi' spirit in the Internet Age by understanding the relevance of Satyagraha, Swaraj, and Swadeshi.
3. To decode the meaning of 'Music of the Spinning Wheel, a mystical phrase in the Mahatma's writing connoting the quest of his technological tool for MAN-WARD LOVE and GOD-WARD COMMUNION.
4. To posit the Internet as an avatar of the Spinning Wheel, provided the evolution of the Digital Era is guided by mankind's ancient wisdom to minimise its perils and maximise its promises.
5. A call for all of us to become 'INTERNET SATYAGRAHIS.'

* * *

PART ONE: Pathways to Satyagraha

Where he sat became a temple ...

'I am not the Servant of India. I am the Servant of Truth.' - Mahatma Gandhi

SATYAGRAHA: A Unified Theory of Truth Linking Science, Religion and Social Change.

* * *

PART TWO: Romance with Science

Was Gandhiji Opposed to Science and Technology? A CARICATURE!

A 'Thought Revolution'; Technology for a New Civilisation

'Everything can be converted into Science or Romance.' - Mahatma Gandhi

Champion of Nature Cure and Healthcare Research

A MAHATMA who was also a Cobbler, Weaver, Scavenger, Carpenter, Cook, Farmer, Teacher, and Nurse ...

A Sanitary Scientist's Unfilled Dream of 'Toilets for All.'

* * *

PART THREE: Harmony Seeker

Decoding the Meaning of 'Music of the Spinning Wheel.'

When the Music of the Spinning wheel mingled with the Music of Beethoven.

'Truth is God' and God is Joy': An illuminating dialogue between Romain Rolland and Gandhiji.

'A true artist whose mission was to make Gods out of Men of Clay' - Nandlal Bose

* * *

PART FOUR: Beacon for the Present and Future

Nonviolent Economic Growth: Need to Align Money with Morality, Justice and Peace.

Gandhiji and Evolutionary Biology: From Man the Brute to Man the God.

Nuclear Weapons: Eliminate all Weapons of Mass Destruction NOW!

SURVIVAL OF THE KINDEST: Women and the Science of Nonviolence.

A Pioneer of the Green Movement.

The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way in which its animals are treated. - Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhiji's Brahmacharya: Divinising Sexual Energy for Nonviolence.

* * *

PART FIVE: Gandhiji as a Visionary of the Internet Age.

How Internet is serving the 'Khadi Spirit; in the 21st century.

Richard Feynman; Eric Drexler; Dr. Harold Kroto

Nanotech Revolution: Small will not only be Beautiful but also Bountiful.

Village and the Global Village: How the Internet Harmonises Globalisation with Swadeshi.

Internet for Peace

INTERNET

A Weapon of Mass Construction

How the Web is Promoting World Peace

How Gandhiji awaited the arrival of a Universally Useful Machine

1869 - Birth of Mahatma Gandhi

1969 - Birth of the Internet

How and Why the Net was Born

Norbert Wiener; Alan Turing; Vannever Bush; J.C.R. Licklider; Doug Engelbart; Tim Berners-Lee

'Gandhian' pioneers of the Internet

Be the change you wish to see in the world — Mohandas K. Gandhi

Think Different — Apple

WWW

"We are constantly being astonished at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence ... But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of Nonviolence." - Mahatma Gandhi

Where the Internet is - and ought to be headed.

What Einstein saw in the Mahatma.

Epilogue - It's Time We All Become INTERMET SATYAGRAHIS

Young Indian thinkers (should) finally get over their morbid colonial fascination for Marx and Mao. - Anthony J. Parel, Renowed Gandhian scholar.

Mahatma Gandhi is a prophet for the age of Communication Revolution. His wisdom can help us reap the promise of the future while avoiding the peril. - Ray Kurzweil, Renowned inventor and technofuturist.

Gandhiji's influence has spread far and wide throughout the world, giving us a hope for a better future for our children. - Dr. Harold Kroto, Nobel laureate nanotechnologist.

Film created by Riddhi Jaydeo Chokhawala and colleagues at Observer Research Foundation Mumbai

Life from a deeply spiritual science perspective. Both spiritual perspective and science perspective. He was a saintly man, but he had deep faith in the power of science, technology, and machinery. .Where he differed from others was the revolutionary power of modern science, modern machinery, modern technology. It should be used not for violence, not for waging war, not for exploitation of the weak by the strong, or of weak countries by strong countries. Not for promoting greed and unnecessary wants, and not for colonisation and exploitation of other creatures.

Rather, Gandhiji believed that science and technology should be used to fulfill the basic needs of all human beings in the earth. They should be used to eradicate poverty, hunger, and disease. And, they should be used to reduce human tragedy. They should be used to spread knowledge. Knowledge of both the external world, and of the internal world of the human heart, mind, and soul.

Indeed, Gandhiji had a romantic attachment to all those discoveries and inventions of science and technology which had the potential to serve humanity.

You might have noticed a very interesting line in the film where he says—where Gandhiji says—that everything in life can be converted into science and romance. Science and romance. The use of the word romance here is deliberate.

For Gandhiji, romance meant love of humanity. Love of anything and everything that brought happiness to humanity. In a sense, Gandhiji was a romantic and spiritually guided scientist. He redefined the meaning of

science and love to embrace love for everybody on earth. Not just human beings, but all living beings on earth. For him, God, truth, nonviolence, and love meant one and the same thing.

Gandhiji believed that everything in human life should be guided by the same truth, by the same set of ethical and harmony-creating principles be it politics, economics, relations between nations and religious communities, and also relations between man and nature.

In practical terms, service of truth and nonviolence meant first and foremost service of the poor and the needy, care and compassion, and cooperation. You know, he encapsulated this value, this idea in just two words: sarvodaya and antyodaya.

ಸರ್ವೋದಯ ಎಲ್ಲರ ಉದಯವಾಗಬೇಕು. ಆದರೆ ಮುಖ್ಯವಾಗಿ ಅಂತ್ಯೋದಯ - ಸಮಾಜದಲ್ಲಿ ಅಂತಿಮ ಸ್ಥಾನದಲ್ಲಿ ಯಾರಿದ್ದಾರೆ ಅವರ ಉದಯ ಮೊದಲಾಗಬೇಕು. ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ವಿಜ್ಞಾನ ಮತ್ತು ತಂತ್ರಜ್ಞಾನದ ಉಪಯೋಗವಾಗಬೇಕು. ಇದು ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯವರ ವಿಚಾರ.

(Sarvodaya should be the dawn of all. But most importantly Antyodaya - the rise of those who are in the last place in the society should be first. Science and technology should be used for this. This is Gandhiji's idea.)

Gandhi conducted amazing scientific experiments in the communes or ashrams that he established. Two in South Africa where he spent 20 transformative years of his life between 1894 and 1915 and two later in India. His communes, his ashrams, were indeed R&D centers, centers for research and development where he researched into both matters of man's outer world and the mysteries of man's inner world.

I can say without any fear of being contradicted that Gandhiji is the only political leader in modern times who attached least importance to politics. Friends, you know he was the leader of our freedom movement, which was a political movement. But he attached the least importance to politics. He spent more time turning his spinning wheel and popularizing khadi, which he projected as a non-violent weapon against colonial exploitation. He spent more time nursing the sick. He spent more time conducting experiments in health and nature cure. He spent more time exhorting the Indian people to remove the scourge of untouchability. He was the great social reformer.

He spent more time conducting experiments in children's education. He spent more time championing the cause of women's empowerment since he believed that the law of the future evolution of the human species is not survival of the fittest. The law of the future evolution of human life is not survival of the fittest but survival of the kindest. It was his firm conviction that the womanly qualities of care, compassion, nurturing and motherly love alone would save mankind and take it to a higher level of evolution. In his own words I quote, "if non-violence is the law of our being the future is with women."

And Gandhiji spent more time preaching and practicing inter-religious harmony and ultimately he became a martyr to the dark forces which did not believe in inter-religious harmony. Friends, there is also no other leader in modern history of mankind who philosophized about the importance of inter-religious harmony. He philosophically linked all these ideals of decolonization of nations, end of exploitation, end to wars and violence, elimination of poverty, sustainable or green development, women's empowerment, development of science and technology, social reform, religious harmony and man's inner purification and transformation. He linked all these to one supreme ideal and that ideal is pursuit of truth and non-violence.

For Gandhiji, satyagraha was not only a non-violent method of struggle for India's independence. It was a call for establishing a new human civilization based on universal brotherhood, cooperation and the new ethics of life based on honesty, trust and truthfulness. Gandhiji wanted that the world should adopt such science and technology and machinery that would promote these old age old ethical values for creating a new human civilization. Friends, it is my belief that science and technology are shaping the world in such a way that the future of humanity will be more Gandhian than it is today. There are many people today who somehow lack confidence and faith in the power of science and technology.

I appeal to all Gandhians that we should have faith in the power of science and technology because this is the greatest course of transformation that mankind has discovered and invented. We are soon going to enter or perhaps we have already entered the era of artificial intelligence, and artificial intelligence is going to transform the world in ways that we cannot imagine.

I have with me a book. It is by Ray Kurzweil, whose quote you saw in the film and Ray Kurzweil is one of the world's foremost technological futurist. He says about Gandhiji that Gandhiji is a prophet for the age of communication revolution. This is someone who is today considered the foremost authority on artificial intelligence and Ray Kurzweil says that today we have entered an era when we merge with AI. Human bodies are going to merge with artificial intelligence.

In the coming decades, the intelligence, the non-biological intelligence, that is the intelligence of machines, will exceed the intelligence of the human brain, million times. And artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, are going to realize the ideals of Gandhiji.

Decentralization, conservation of material resources, care for nature, all these are going to become possible, provided we use the power of science and technology with wisdom, with Sadbudhdhi, with Sanmathi. that is why I tell one last statement. And this is especially addressed to our dear children here, because they are going to enter a world full of possibilities.

As Gandhiji himself said, and this is truly a prophetic statement, that we are constantly being astonished by the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But then he predicted that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence.

The future belongs to non-violence. The future belongs to love. The future belongs to compassion. The future belongs to non-cooperation.

So let's leave such a wonderful new future, bright future, for our children, for children of India, for the children of the entire world. Thank you very much. Jai Hind, Jai Jagat.

GANDHIAN TECHNOLOGY FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Mr. Sam Pitroda, Telecom Inventor and Information & Communications Technologist

Friends, greetings from Chicago, it is indeed a special privilege and honor for me to be here with you to say a few words on Gandhi and technology. To me, Gandhi was a great role model, inspiration, especially at a time when I went to school. I was born in 1942 in British Raj.

In the boarding school I went to, it was totally Gandhian. I believe Gandhi is more relevant today than ever before in history. Of course, Gandhi means many things to many people. He was the father of a nation. He was a leader, Fakir. He was an idea, he was a concept, and he was a phenomenon. He was the decolonizer of the British Raj. He promoted nonviolence, but commanded no armies, had no government positions, and led the biggest independence movement in history, which ultimately resulted in decolonizing the entire world.

He was a great communicator who believed in simplicity, sense of sacrifice, service to people, unconditional love for all, truth and absolute truth. Single standard of conduct in public and private life really defined Gandhi in many ways. Gandhi was not against technology. But Gandhi was against technology that was misused, like everything else. Gandhi was for technology, benefiting people at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Technology that could not divide people, but unite people. Technology that could create opportunities for large number of people in rural areas.

I'm confident that Gandhiji would have been excited about Internet, social media. Because it is all about openess, accessibility. connectivity, networking, democratization, decentralization, and ultimately, social transformation and economic opportunities.

Gandhi believed in decentralization. Small is beautiful. Local talent. Local capabilities. Local needs. And, opportunity to create local jobs. Unfortunately, very few

people really go into deeper understanding of Gandhi, and his ways and means to bring development to a large number of people.

I have studied Gandhi a little bit. I believe his thoughts and actions related to environment, Dandi March, salt, songs like *Vaishnava Jana To*, his prayers, his charkha, his dhoti, all were symbols of communicating a great message. His life was his message, loud and clear.

When I started my work on telecom, I took inspiration from Gandhi. The digital technology must reach all the villages. This was in early 1980s when I met Mrs. Indira Gandhi and talked about transforming India through telecom and IT, which was quite a new concept in those days.

Mrs. Gandhi understood it, supported me. Then Rajiv Gandhi gave me political will. I wanted to implement, but the idea then was exactly opposite to Western concept. Western world wanted big switches, big manufacturing, increasing telephone density, and Gandhian thought said, it is all about connecting villages, smaller exchanges, rural communication, distributed architecture, indigenous talent, low cost, local manufacturing, local ancillary industries, and building human capacity. What we started then, when we had only 2 million telephones in India, has now mushroomed into a country of connected people. We have 1.15 billion phones and we generate $200 billion worth of software service export every year, year after year.

It was possible only because we took Gandhian approach. If we had taken the Western approach of importing telephone exchanges, importing software for it, we wouldn't be where we are. Very few people understand the contribution of Gandhian thought in our approach to telecom development, IT development.

To me, Gandhi comes at three different levels. One, at a personal level, people level, which to me emphasize truth, trust, love, courage, and conviction.

Gandhi always talked about courage. Courage was the key to Gandhian activity on sacrifice, simplicity. Then at a planet level, Gandhi meant environment, needs of the people, bottom-up development, and dedicating your life to the service. At a platform level, Gandhi was a true believer in democracy, human rights, freedom, inclusion, diversity, non-violence, and Gandhi would have used social media very effectively to promote all of these.

It is unfortunate that a few people are using social media to malign Gandhi with misinformation. I feel sorry for all of them. I wish they would take a little more time to understand the power of this Indian mind committed to larger public good. If world had followed Gandhi while restructuring the global equation with World Bank, IMF, WTO, WHO, UN, and focused on Gandhian ideas, I tell you, the world would be very different today. Gandhian ideas would have included decentralization, sustainability, non-violence. These are very powerful things. Gandhi was a man of technology. Gandhi was a man of ideas and innovations. And I am delighted that we are remembering Gandhi once again at this event.

We need millions and millions of people all over the world to think about this. We need people all over the world to think about Gandhi, promote Gandhi, and make Gandhi relevant today. In the day of technology, Gandhi is more relevant, especially in social media.

So I wish you all the best. I want to compliment you for taking this initiative. And thank you for giving me the opportunity.

CENTRALIZED Vs DECENTRALIZED INTERNET - LOCATING GANDHI IN THE DEBATE

Mr. Carl Malamud, Technologist and advocate of Public Domain –Public.Resource.Com

I wish to thank Omshivaprakash, my friend and colleague and co-founder of the Servants of Knowledge, the Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi and the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi for inviting me. I especially want to thank Dr. Wooday P Krishna, Mr. Vishukumar and Honorary Secretary Narendra for giving the Servants of Knowledge such a nice home here at the Gandhi Bhavan. It's been a real pleasure and an honor to partake of the activities.

I also wish to thank my friend and colleague, Kollegala Sharma, science educator par excellence, Mr. Kulkarni, a public servant and Gandhian, and of course, our spinners for this wonderful technology demo. Thank you.

Sam Pitroda's comments were inspiring, but let me tell you a little back story that he didn't mention.

Sam said he asked to see Indira Gandhi. He wanted to put a telephone in every village. It was pretty presumptuous to ask to see the Prime Minister. He wasn't connected. He wasn't a politician or anything. And so the Prime Minister's Office finally came back and said he could have 10 minutes. And Sam said, no, he needed a full hour. And the secretary was a little bit taken aback and went back to the PMO and said he'd check. And a month later they called and he said he could have the full hour. And that was real chutzpah, but that's Sam Pitroda, who was not going to take no for an answer.

Sam talked about how the Internet was a decentralized architecture, was Gandhian. I want to expand on that to talk about how there were actually two Internets in the early days. And there are two Internets today.

I started working on computers in the late 1960s when I was a little boy. My father used to bring me to the

laboratory to help him boot up the computers. In those days you had to flip switches before the computers would wake up and say hello. And by the late 1970s it was clear that something was happening with both communications and computers. They were converging. They were becoming the same thing. I dropped out of my Ph.D. program in Economics to work for the computing center at Indiana University.

I went to Washington, D.C. and I helped change how computers were used at the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, our central bank. And in the 1980s I wrote a series of books about computer networks.

By about 1985, those of us in the field knew there was going to be a global Internet. We had no idea how big it was going to be, and we were all shocked and amazed at how big it ended up being today. But back then, only those of us working in the field had the hubris to believe this was actually happening. But it was happening.

In those days, all communications was the province of centralized telecommunications companies. We called them telcos. In the U.S., it was AT&T, and then it was broken up into a series of regional telcos. But it was still, you had one choice. And in India, it was ITI, Indian Telephone Industries. Those big companies and big government thought they were going to build the Internet. It was what I would call the Raj Internet. Or perhaps an East India Company Internet, or perhaps a bit of both.

But it wasn't your Internet.

The telcos owned all the equipment. They told you what you could connect to the telephone. It was totally top-down, totally centralized. And this was the case all over the world. The telcos banded together with governments like the European Commission and the U.S. Department of Defense. They dreamed up an Internet they called the Open Systems Interconnection, or OSI. It was coordinated by the International Standards Organization. Everybody spent billions of dollars on the Raj Internet. Tens of thousands of people worked on it.

In their vision, the telcos would operate the entire Internet and they tell you exactly what you could do. It was a black box. They'd have a menu of services you could purchase like text messaging or email and you paid per message and per email. All of them would cost money. You bought your Internet a la carte and it was not cheap. This was not an all-you-can-eat buffet. They called this Raj Internet a so-called smart network by which they meant all the smarts were in the middle. The Telco was smart. You were to understand how the net worked. You had to spend thousands and thousands of dollars to buy the standards and the net was encumbered by all sorts of patents. There was another Internet bill.

Meanwhile a few hundred people all over the world working in research labs and universities and small companies a few for government, many of them like me self-employed consultants, were banding together in an informal group called the Internet Engineering Task Force. Our network was totally decentralized. To us the telcos were done their sports were all on the edges in the computers. All the telco was supposed to do was push bits from one place to another. No fancy services that you bought or anything like that. Our Internet was based on open source software and open protocols and no patents. Any computer could be a server. Anybody could invent a new service like my friend Tim Berners-Lee who created the World Wide Web.

This was a Gandhian Internet. Gandhi said the future of India was in the villages, not the corporate and government centers like Mumbai and Delhi. We believed the future of

the Internet was in the laptops and desktops and phones, not vested in the corporate towers of the telcos. Gokhale told Gandhi to go to the villages, we went to the desktops.

We weren't supposed to win. The Raj Internet was destined to be the one and only Internet but it's gone today. We won that war. The Internet is in fact a Gandhian net. The title of this session asks if a synthesis is possible between on the one hand Gandhian values, and on the other hand, the revolutionary power of technology. Many people assume on the one hand you have Gandhi and on the other hand you have technology and science, and I think this is totally wrong.

Gandhi always believed in the revolutionary power of technology. The question was to what aims did you practice the revolution? Was it to enrich the rich, to enrich yourself, to cement the power of the central government? To enforce communal divides by this information; to keep down the poor? He opposed that. Or, would technology be used to bring up the people to level the playing field, to work for all of us, no matter what our means? He embraced that kind of technology.

For him technology was not a magic bullet the future was in the people it wasn't in some magic thing. It isn't AI or singularities that will save the world. It's people and how they use the technology that will make the difference now.

A perfect illustration of why characterizing Gandhi as anti-science is totally wrong comes from my friend Ram Guha who writes about Gandhi's views on medicine. Gandhi was originally against scientific medicine and only believed in natural cures and herbal medicines. That may have been true when he was younger but Gandhi was always open to learn and he learned about western medicine and by 1919 he believed enough that he asked for surgery to cure his piles, and was so impressed that he recommended it to anybody else who had that issue.

In 1921 Gandhi opened a medical college in Delhi, the Tibbia College. He paid tribute to the spirit of research that fires the modern scientists, but then he issued a stern warning. He said "My quarrel is not against that spirit. My complaint is against the direction that the spirit has taken. It has chiefly concerned itself with the exploration of laws and methods conducive to the merely material advancement of its clientele."

One of my favorite Gandhi stories is a few years later in 1925 in Kolkata. He was asked to lay the foundation for a new Ayurvedic university, the Ashtanga Ayurveda Vidyalaya. All the dignitaries present spoke about the bright future and the mission of this new enterprise, what a great occasion it was to be there.

And then it came Gandhi's turn to speak. He trashed the joint.

He criticized the whole enterprise. He started out talking about medicine in general, expressed his usual reticence about medicine, what a difficult patient he was. But then he focused specifically on Ayurvedic medicine. He called the Ayurvedic doctors arrogant. They lacked humility, they promised that they could cure all diseases. He said the industry was selling humbug medicines only to make money, that magazines were full of advertisements that catered to the basest passions of humanity only to make money. He said the advertisements were alluring and no doubt profitable, but were cutting deep into the vitals of the suffering humanity.

He totally trashed the joint. The committee asked him to withdraw his comments and he refused. He said what he believed and he was sticking with it. He believed in Ayurveda

properly applied, but he didn't like how it was being applied now.

I take two lessons from this. The first of course was that if you invited Gandhi to speak, you should be prepared for him to speak his mind and not assume he would sing your praises. He spoke truth, spoke truth to power.

The other, of course, is that Gandhi I believe would have been a huge user of technology today, as Mr. Kulkarni and Sam Pitroda both said. If Gandhi, for example, were asked by Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, the owner of Twitter, to speak at Twitter, I think the same thing would happen. Gandhi would with a twinkle in his eyes say "of course I'd be happy to speak" and then he would totally trash the joint. I don't know what Gandhi would say, but I'll tell you what I would say about Twitter: it's a cesspool of misinformation; it's a haven for extremists; it is non transparent, biased and manipulated; it has become a sewer of social media; has the morals and dedication to public service of the East India Company.

We went from the Raj Internet where governments will control your Internet, to have the East India Company Internet for Mark Zuckerberg at Meta and Elon Musk at Twitter. You are the product. You are there to make profits for their companies located in the West. You are there to be manipulated in elections, to be manipulated with misinformation and disinformation and bias. This is the Raj Internet. There is a Raj Internet, right, the Sarkaar. There is the East India Company Internet, the Bazaar. There is a third path, Samaaj, civil society. This is Rohini Nilekani's wonderful three-part explanation of the world.

In the Gandhian Internet, there's a world out there of open source and open protocol and open science and open access to knowledge. And the question is not technology or Gandhi, it's not a revolution. It is the path that Gandhi followed his whole life. And we simply follow in the footsteps of the Mahatma. If you're in the technology business, the question is not the magic bullets of technology, It's how will you use those magic bullets. Thank you very much.

GANDHIAN TECHNOLOGIES FOR RURAL INDIA

Mr. Kollegala Sharma, Senior Science Communicator and Former Chief Scientist in CSIR-Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore

Namaskara everyone. All the team of Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, Sri Kulakarniji, Carl Malamud ji, dignitaries, friend Jayadev in the audience, please listen to my words and tell me if my talk is right or wrong.

Before coming here, I was very hesitant. Hesitant because I belong to a generation which I call as the Trishanku generation. Trishanku generation mainly because we never fought for independence. We never started building this nation. But we were very, very vocal in criticizing whatever was happening. And standing right next to people like Sudheendra Kulkarni or speaking after Carl Malamud or our technologist Sam Pitroda, it's very difficult. I remember, in 1983, when I started my career as a telephone operator, it was very difficult to connect Mysore to Kumbakonam. I spent five nights on those days to connect one call. Those were the times. It was later that the RAX came, what Sam Pitroda was mentioning.

The idea was, of course, to take technology and science to everyone in India. And this was because Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru believed that science and technology is the only tool that can provide solutions to the problems that India faced and the world faced. In fact every scientist that I have come across who speaks about using science and technology for development usually quotes Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. But what I wonder is how Nehru could be a disciple of Gandhi, who we were taught was a technology - averse person, who didn't like the technology at that time? How could Nehru think of science and technology as the tool for the development of this nation!

Let us look back at that. I'm not going to talk about Gandhian values and the science and technology in present world or in the future world. That has been discussed threadbare by previous speakers. What I will be talking about is as the third generation of this country, post-

independence. Have we used science and technology to build that future India which Gandhi dreamt about?

Gandhi had specific dreams about India. In 1931 in Chatham House, when he gave a lecture, he outlined what future India should be. And remember in 1931 we didn't have the kind of technologies that we have today. Neither in health, nor in irrigation, nor in agriculture. We just had, I think, the chemical fertilizers being used in Germany. And at that time, Gandhi had spoken about what kind of an India we need.

Three core principles that he spoke about were this : One is decentralized villages the villages should enjoy Gram Swaraj, as he worded it. Villages should be self-sufficient in everything. And, of course, the image that he gave or a metaphor that he used was the charkha. I look at charkha, not as a tool, but as a metaphor, as an image of what we should be doing to the villages. He said, when he was discussing the role of science and technology, that we should, whatever we do in the future, consider the 80% of the people who live in villages and who need help from others. And this was in 1931, when we were only 300 million population.

Today, we are 1,200 million population. And in spite of that, we still have those 80% people needing science and technology, or any help that they can get. So, we have not progressed much. We still have a lot to do to make our villages independent, make our villages self-sufficient. And like Carl said, in this area of technology, decentralization is very important.

Whenever I go around Mysore, I see blacksmiths, Kammara families on the roadside. Although, they sell Knives, Katti, Kudugolu, and other agricultural implements, made right on the roadside, there is a contrast in the enterprise. They come from villages to urban areas and they want to sell their wares here. Could they not have done it from their villages? Could we not provide technological means for them to do that from their houses? This is the first question.

The second question is related to what Sam Pitroda said, about wanting to take technology to the rural areas. The roadside smithies use a solar panel. Solar electricity panels are a fantastic technology, a future technology. But what do they use that for? They use that technology to power their mobile phones. Not for the core activity that they are doing. And this is what surprises me.

Could we not have provided a means, a technology, for them to do whatever they are good at? The smithy work. Could we not provide technology to run their furnace. A technology which is portable?.

And if that could have happened, Gandhi's vision of providing tools to this 80% population, that gives them jobs in their places and retains the character of Indian villages as it is, would have been realized. But that has not happened.

Similarly, the other vision that Gandhiji had was about education. And education is something that many of us discuss very frequently. Because it forms , I should say, the steps on which we can reach out to a higher level. And Gandhi said about education that we needed education for everyone. A school in every village, a headmaster in every village. We now have all those things.

But he also said that this education should not be costly. We have schools in every village, but not affordable education to everyone. So this is something that worries me. And this development, of privatization of education, is recent.

When I was young, people had started using Gandhi as a derogatory term. We had free education. But today, when I have to send my children to school, I have to pay high prices. And if you do a survey around the

villages, almost 30 to 40% of their earnings are spent on children's education. And this is something that we need to be very cautious about. How can we use science and technology to provide education to all equally? And it's not difficult. I was discussing it with Carl.

We have open source technology. We have distributed networks which we can use. We have tried these methods during COVID epidemic, of using online teaching. We only have to tweak a little bit more and make ourselves comfortable with the technology. And use that to reach even those unreached.

That is something that I look forward to in the future. Mr Jayadev here is doing tremendous job in setting up a free school in Chamarajanagar. But that is only one pocket. Can we have similar exercises or similar systems throughout the country where everybody will have a good education? We need Jaidevs everywhere. Not just in one place. Or we should do away with Jaidev. The system should take care of it.

So can technology help? Technology can definitely help. For example, the solar lighting. SELCO an NGO, provided solar lighting to several villages, making electrification of villages easy..

My question is, we are able to provide this, but have we realized what Gandhi wanted?, Besides providing these tools, we should also make the people self-reliant in developing the tools, the products, and selling them. That we are not doing. So the technology over the past 30-40 years, as I have seen, has helped the urban areas to develop, has made the rural areas look towards the urban areas for everything, from toothbrush to even now the mats that we sleep on. . And we are also importing the problems of urban pollution to villages through this.

Can we not reverse this? If you go to Mysore, early morning, 7 to 9 o'clock, you will see huge traffic from outside Mysore into the city. And these are people coming to city, looking for a daily job. They are wage earners. They come to the city, gather in some place - there are several such gathering places in Mysore - and wait for someone to give them a job for that day. That's one of the pictures that you get in the cities.

Can we not stop this traffic? The technology is there. There are several technologies that we have. Let's take e-commerce, for example. E-commerce could be leveraged very well to take the rural technology to the urban areas. There have been efforts for doing that. But the rural products also have to match the versatility of the urban large-scale products. Can that be the future technologies, that engineers and scientists should be looking at. Have we done something like this?

One example that comes to my mind is from CSIR-CFTRI, Mysore which did this long back. It developed small tools that could be used in rural areas or in different places for a distributed production. For example, machines to make Lijjat Pappad or the environmental - friendly leaf plates. These were small devices which were taken up by lakhs of people and were used across India. And this is what I think Gandhi had in his mind.

And even in Internet age, we can have such technologies that can go rural. Like there are call centers which are cheating people in some village areas, not in urban areas. But that is not what we want. We want call centers that provide information, education to the rural areas in their place, in their language, and what they need. That Gandhi is being discussed today, after 90 years of that talk ,means that he will be relevant always. His values will be relevant forever. But then how do we match those values by our actions? That's where I think we have to think, brood, introspect, and act.

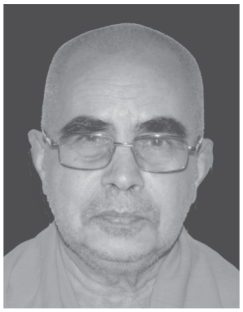
Thank you very much.

SESSION 5

DIALOGUE AMONG RELIGIONS FOR PEACE AND HARMONY

SPIRITUALITY, MORALITY AND HUMANITY AS THE CORNERSTONE OF RELIGION

Shri. Swami Nityasthananda ji, President of Ramakrishna Math, Bengaluru



Mahatma Gandhi's life and message revolve around two profound ideas: Satya (Truth) and Ahimsa (Non-violence). These concepts are foundational to his philosophy and resonate deeply with us. Satya symbolizes moral integrity and the essence of morality itself. Without truthfulness as its core, morality loses its substance and purpose. Ahimsa, or non-violence, embodies humanity and human compassion, which are vital to fostering understanding and harmony.

Gandhi's spirituality was another significant dimension of his life, seamlessly intertwined with his political endeavors. His spirituality was not confined to rituals or dogma but was rooted in a profound sense of truth, morality, and humanity. These three principles—spirituality, morality, and humanity—formed the cornerstone of his worldview and are essential aspects of religion.

Spirituality, as Gandhi demonstrated, serves as the foundation of religion. Without spirituality, morality becomes unsustainable. Similarly, without spirituality and morality, humanity struggles to thrive. Together, these three dimensions provide the key to religious harmony. If we hold steadfastly to these principles, the possibility of achieving harmony among religions becomes a certainty.

The most essential aspects of religion—spirituality, morality, and humanity—form its very foundation. If these principles are upheld, religious harmony is not only possible but inevitable. These are the pillars that support true religion, transcending superficial divisions and fostering a deeper unity among all.

While religion also encompasses temples, rituals, modes of worship, sacred texts, festivals, and other

cultural elements, these, as Swami Vivekananda eloquently said, are secondary details. They have their place in enriching religious practice but should not overshadow the core spiritual essence of religion. According to Vivekananda, religion is realization, a manifestation of divinity. It is this spiritual aspect that must be emphasized for achieving religious harmony. When spirituality is prioritized, it inevitably nurtures morality and humanity, ensuring peace and harmony.

To illustrate this concept, consider a tree. The roots represent the spirituality of the religious tree, the foundational source of life and sustenance. The trunk and branches signify morality, providing structure and strength. Finally, the flowers and fruits embody humanity, offering beauty, nourishment, and fulfillment. Surrounding this tree, there may be thorny bushes, creepers, and other distractions, but they are secondary to the core tree itself. Without humanity, without humanitarian considerations, religion loses its true value and purpose.

Religion, in its essence, is like a great tree. The creepers, thorny bushes, and other surrounding elements—rituals, traditions, festivals, and practices—are the secondary details. These aspects, while not unimportant, often receive undue emphasis. This misplaced focus on secondary elements can overshadow the core principles of spirituality and morality, leading to misunderstandings and, tragically, communal disharmony.

The spiritual and moral dimensions of religion are fundamental. Without spirituality, the root of religion is lost, and without morality, its structure crumbles. When these two are prioritized, harmony naturally follows. The example of Sri Ramakrishna illustrates this beautifully. He practiced the various denominations within Hinduism and explored other religions as well. Through this deep and inclusive practice, he realized that all religions, despite their differences in practice and belief, ultimately lead to the same goal—the ultimate reality or God.

Vakulatha Tai emphasizes that the yearning for God—a profound spiritual aspiration—is the most essential quality in the spiritual journey. When this deep aspiration exists, everything else aligns naturally, leading every individual to the ultimate divine goal. This idea resonates deeply with the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, who likened the spiritual quest to the ascent of a mountain.

Sri Ramakrishna saw himself as an ambitious mountaineer, one who climbed the mountain of spirituality from multiple directions. Having reached the summit from one path, he sought to ascend again using other, more challenging routes. At the base of the mountain, the paths are many, diverse, and appear distinct. However, as one climbs closer to the peak, the differences in the paths diminish. Ultimately, all climbers converge at the summit, symbolizing the oneness of truth. For Sri Ramakrishna, every religious and spiritual path, regardless of its apparent uniqueness, leads to the same ultimate reality—the divine. This oneness is the cornerstone of his teachings, urging us to transcend differences and embrace unity.

Swami Vivekananda often pointed out the dual nature of religion. He acknowledged that much good has been done through religion, particularly through humanitarian activities and service initiatives, which are often inspired by religious figures and their teachings. However, he also highlighted the darker side of religion, where, in its name, immense bloodshed and violence have occurred. Despite the compassion at the heart of many religious teachings, these conflicts and atrocities continue even today. This contradiction underscores the need for a deeper

understanding of the spiritual essence of religion, beyond its rituals and external practices, to truly foster peace and harmony.

Unless we focus on the core aspects of religion—spirituality, morality, and humanity—communal violence will persist. This is because we often get caught up in the peripheral aspects of religion, the secondary details, where differences naturally arise. These differences are inevitable and, without a deeper understanding of the essential aspects, they lead to conflict. The key, then, is to hold onto the primary values of religion. If we emphasize spirituality, and dedicate ourselves to spiritual growth and practices, it will strengthen our moral foundation and, in turn, lead to greater harmony and understanding among people.

What I've mentioned earlier, using the tree as an example, illustrates that when we neglect the root, the foundation, the tree eventually collapses. Similarly, when we ignore spirituality, it weakens morality, which in turn weakens humanity. Without a strong foundation in spirituality, morality cannot sustain itself, and the result is violence and conflict. That is why we must hold on to spirituality.

Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, and other great personalities all held firmly to their spirituality. Even though Gandhi was deeply involved in politics, he remained rooted in spirituality. This is the message we must take from them: we must hold onto spirituality. Only with a firm spiritual foundation can we engage in various aspects of human life, including politics, social work, and community building.

I am truly honored to be here today, participating in this esteemed gathering and sharing a few thoughts on peace and religious harmony. Thank you all very much.

MAHATMA GANDHI : A MODEL OF SARVA DHARMA MAITRI

Archbishop Rev Felix Machado, Archbishop of Vasai

At the very outset I would like to thank Wooday KrishnaJi as well as VishukumarJi and their collaborators for inviting me for this International Seminar. My close association dates back to over forty years when Shreemati Ushabehen Mehta was the Director of Manibhavan in Mumbai (Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Mumbai). Since Mahatma Gandhi could not meet Pope Pius XI due to logistical difficulties I facilitated Shreemati Ushabehen visit to the Vatican in 1999. She came and sat beside Pope John Paul II and spoke to the audience of over 40,000 people in St Peter's Piazza and after the speech was embraced by Pope John Paul II. It was like Mahata Gandhi embracing fraternally the Pope.

We talk endlessly about respect for the rights of the human person, but attacks on the dignity of the human person keep on increasing as never before. All people aspire for peace, while conflicts between peoples never stop and are often sustained by easy access to various types of arms. Society is becoming more and more sensitive to the problems of ecological balance, but the radical change of attitude that is required of people never takes place. Health and happiness are becoming higher goals of human life, but paradoxically they are in danger because of our selfishness. The sense of a common responsibility about the future of humanity is often forgotten by the desire for immediate self-gratification. It is in this context that interreligious dialogue questions our conscience or encourages us to hope for a better future.

What is Interreligious Dialogue? It is Maitri Among Religions

Interreligious dialogue is basically a network of interpersonal relationships. One must learn to relate to the other with respect and esteem for the dignity of the

other. Through dialogue one can enter into the very depth of the lives of all people who profess and adhere to their respective religious traditions. Interreligious dialogue is not intended to enter into polemics and debates between religions. It is not a question of cerebral discussion across the table. It is not even negotiations between persons in order to strike the least common denominator. The art of listening intensively to the other plays an important role in interreligious dialogue. When conflicts, disagreements or disputes arise among believers of religions, dialogue remains the only alternative. But dialogue will achieve very little if it has not been initiated during good and peaceful times. Interreligious dialogue is not an ambulance or a fire-brigade which can be called only when emergency arises. Cultivating friendly and fraternal relations during good and peaceful times is the best practice. Interreligious dialogue concerns all believers of every religion; none is excluded, no one is left behind.

All Believers of all Religions need to Participate in Building Sarva Dharma Maitri

A vast field lies open to dialogue, which can assume many forms and expressions in service of peace, justice, fraternity and sustainable development. There is the so-called dialogue of life through which believers of different religions bear gentle and non-imposing witness to their own human and spiritual values before each other in daily life and help each other to build a more just and fraternal society; there can be an exchange between experts of their respective religions or between official representatives of those religious traditions to clarify nuances; dialogue of cooperation for 'integral development of every person and all people', and safe-guarding religious values as patrimony of all, which can be put at the service of caring for our home, i.e. planet earth and thereby achieving integral development of each person and all people. There is also dialogue in which believers of different religions share their deeper spiritual experiences and enrich the religious patrimony of Mother India.

Mahatma Gandhi: A Model of Sarva Dharma Maitri

Mahatma Gandhi may not have done formal interreligious dialogue as we understand it today. He was embodiment of interreligious dialogue and his life has become an inspiration and encouragement for all believers and also to those who declare not to belong to any religious tradition.

Gandhiji wished to know himself ever more profoundly and enriched his appreciation of his own faith tradition. He also wished to know the other ever more authentically and gain a friendly understanding of others as they are, and not in caricature. Finally, the Mahatma wished to live ever more fully accordingly and to establish a more solid foundation for his ashram community and his action for the good of each person and all people, regardless of their religious affiliation.

Mahatma Gandhi believed that good interfaith relations can open the way to better relations in order to build peace in multi-religious society. Today we need to develop a global outlook in our mindset that will be appropriate for the unfolding sense of a globalised world. He condemned violence and terrorism as being against the spirit of all true religion and pledged to removing their causes. His respect for all religions and his efforts to make sure that people of all religions have the freedom to follow their own beliefs and practices remains exemplary. He encouraged cultural diversity as well as religious diversity as a source of enrichment.

Mahatma Gandhi: Life Sacrificed for Peace

The theme of peace is central to all

religions This is why Mahatma Gandhi undertook the task of making every effort to make humanity one family of God. In which all people live in harmony and peace. He saw the theme of peace in a wider context of the problems in the world: the dehumanizing poverty, exploitation of weaker sections of society, like children, women, especially those who are victims of war, of broken families and of abuse, ecological disaster, discrimination on the basis of caste and religious affinity, oppression of minorities, problems related to disillusioned youth, unequal distribution of the world's resources, etc.

Mahatma Gandhi realized that peace is also threatened when believers choose to live in isolation, apart from one another in complacency and without concern for others who live next to them, a situation which leads to lack of openness; an antidote to this tendency, Mahatma Gandhi emphasized the importance of prayer in every believer's life; because, "prayer gives support to all who love peace and desire to promote it in accordance with their own possibilities and in the various circumstances in which they live. Prayer not only opens up to a meeting with the Almighty God, but also disposes us to a meeting with our neighbour, helping us to establish with everyone, without discrimination, relationship of respect, understanding, esteem and love. Religious sentiment and a prayerful spirit not only help us grow inwardly; they also enlighten us about the true meaning of our presence in the world. It can also be said that the religious dimension encourages us to make an even more committed contribution to the building of a well-ordered society in which peace reigns. For peace is the bond which most effectively unites us. It is through prayer before God that believers meet with one another on a level where inequalities, misunderstandings, bitterness and hostility are overcome. Prayer, as the authentic expression of a right relationship with God and with others, is already a positive contribution to peace" (Pope John Paul II at an interreligious prayer meeting in Assisi, 27 October 1986).

Mahatma Gandhi's Relevance for 21st Century

Mahatma Gandhi always dreamt of peace in the hearts of people, peace among people, peace in the beloved Mother India and peace in all societies and the world at large. His was not a wishful thinking but his feet were grounded in the grass-root reality. Mahatma Gandhi left a legacy of peace for the future generations, because peace is not built in one instant but everyone is challenged to keep on building it and without abandoning it in the face of difficulties, always beginning anew.

The greatness of India, liberated from the colonial shackles, cannot be understood properly without remembering the vision of Mahatma Gandhi who worked until the last drop of his blood to make India genuinely great. The progress of the nation cannot be measured by the number of nuclear weapons it has in stock-piles. The real criteria of success are to see the miserable and the destitute rise above the poverty-line, by increasing literacy among all sections of society, eradicating child-marriages and reducing child-deaths, stopping completely the starvation deaths, improving the condition of women, constantly making our democracy strong and robust. This is how we will find out the health and success of the nation. Indian constitutional setup has withstood the complications that an independent, democratic society with diverse castes, linguistic groups and religious communities face, and this is thanks to the Mahatma. India succeeded unlike its neighbours, in bringing substantive democracy to its polity as opposed to other nations where only procedural democracy was established. Indian society has faithfully imbibed the democratic spirit of its constitutional order. Independent

India has built successful robust welfare delivery mechanisms such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and the Public Distribution System, constituted affirmative action programmes to overcome historical inequalities of the caste system of the Indian sub-continent, succeeded in the partial devolution of governance to local institutions such as the Panchayat Raj systems and given economic freedom to the masses with free trade (cooperatives).

Obviously, new challenges await India: (e.g. widening economic inequality, religious caste-based identity, polarisation, corruption, and subsequent apathy among the youth towards our democratic values, etc.) Mahatma Gandhi can still inspire peace, harmony and parity, if we reframe our national ethos to replace the culture of silence with a culture of transparency, the culture of hatred and discrimination with the culture of dialogue and respect, the culture of violence with a culture of peace and the culture of exclusion with a culture of inclusion of those who have been still left behind. We, the citizens of India, keeping with the vision of Mahatam Gandhi, must never allow the writ of State to be replaced by the writ of the economic, political or majoritarian elite" (Kamal Hasaan, The Hindu. 15 August 2024, p. 7).

Even in the XXI century peace in the world has been threatened by the same old forces which generate conflicts and wars; sadly, India is not exempt from these. Among these forces are intolerance and marginalization of all kinds: social, cultural political as well as religious. Day by day fresh violence is inflicted upon individuals and even peoples and the culture of death spreads by unjustifiable recourse to violence to resolve tensions. While it is an innovation to be welcomed, we cannot ignore the potential danger of AI that can deteriorate the situation still further (Here is what M.K. Narayanan, Former Director of Intelligence Bureau and Former National Security Advisor and Former Governor of West Bengal writes (cf Indian Express, August 13, 2024, p. 6): "Awareness of the growing danger of digital threats is but the first step in the battle of cyber and AI directed threats. There is hence, every need to counter digital surveillance, disinformation, bullying and manipulation, for our survival".

Given the appalling situation of wars and conflict in so many parts of the world, the memory of Mahatma Gandhi stands as a guiding star who was deeply involved in international and interreligious efforts to bring about peace, justice and reconciliation. He continued to insist on the negotiated and nonmilitary resolution of conflicts and looked for the day when nations will abandon war as a way of vindicating claims, as a means of resolving differences. Mahatma Gandhi was convinced that war creates more problems than it ever solves, that dialogue is the only just and noble path to mutual agreement and reconciliation and that patient and wise art of peace-making is especially blessed by God Almighty.

Conclusion

The human race is undergoing profound changes and is groping for the guiding principles and the new forces which will lead it into the world of future. India has entered into a new phase of her history, and in this period of transition all efforts must be concentrated on building the future of the nation, not only on a stable material basis, but on firm spiritual foundation. Mahatma Gandhi taught us the path of dialogue by setting before us a concrete example of his life which he offered for peace. He taught the world that prejudice is the result of lack of dialogue, because, opposite of dialogue is mutual ignorance, which breeds prejudice, which in turn, breeds suspicion and hatred, ending in violence and war causing destruction and death. For a more

equitable society and for a more stable peace in a globalized world it is an urgent task of international organizations to help promote a sense of responsibility for the common good. But to achieve this we must never lose sight of the human person who must be the centre of every social project. This is the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi who proposed the path of building a world community based on 'mutual trust', 'mutual support' and 'sincere mutual respect' Thank you! Jai Hind!

Appendix

Is today's society not marked by shattered hope?

We had hoped that the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 would end all hostility and conflict, paving the way to democracy and solidarity. The events of 11 September 2001 and subsequent events, especially two endless wars and other piecemeal incidents throughout the world seem to make it clear that conflicts are to continue. We cannot deny that religion is implicated covertly or overtly; that is the perception of many. Should not followers of different religions manifest clearly that the contrary is true?

Some Issues of Common Interest in Post-modern Multi-cultural and Multi-religious Societies

I wish to present a few pressing challenges which have been confronted by religious traditions today. E.g. 1) Care of Planet Earth and Development; 2) Ethnic, cultural and religious identity; 3) Globalisation; 4) Secularism; and 5) religious freedom.

1. Care of Planet Earth and Development: Fragile ecosystems are being destroyed. The landslides in Wayanad, the terrible flooding in Delhi and several other so-called 'natural' calamities all over the country, show how precious little has been done to address serious environmental concerns. Government projects favour their crony capitalist friends, providing them with a license to loot, plunder and rape the environment; the continued use of fossil fuels is a case in point. The environment is in a shambles! In the 2024 Environmental Performance Index, India was ranked 176 out of 180 countries! The destruction of precious forest lands and bio-diversity, to cater to so-called 'development' projects, contribute immensely to the climatic changes one experiences today. The 2023 Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, provides for the de-reservation of reserved forests, use of forest land for non-forest purpose, assigning forest land by way of lease or otherwise to a private entity. Precious water bodies in the urban areas are land-filled, causing floods. Most major rivers in the country are polluted; there is over-dependence on fossil fuel. Even today, coal blocks are auctioned to crony capitalist friends of the Government. Sections of the corporate sector and particularly the mining mafia–have no qualms of conscience, in depleting precious natural resources, with the sole desire of profiteering.

2. Ethnic, cultural and religious identity. While searching for one's religious identity, one must remember that every religious tradition extends across a long period of time and vast geographical space. It is also true that religious traditions understand their truth claims as universal in nature and relevance. It is also true that the distinction between identity and identification must be maintained. They cannot be separated but they are not one and the same thing. And most importantly, the search for religious identity should be a 'return to roots' and not a return to mere revivalism of the past. In other words, the search for religious identity must be a search for 'internal reform'. Through a 'return to roots', people can receive nourishment for a new growth in order to live in the present; they can discover new visions and new strategies

for action. But when religion becomes a tool for manipulation and instrumentalization in the hands of selfish people the result is merely a 'revivalism' of the past. The goal of the search cannot be primitive chaos, but an attempt to overcome the current fragmentation of life. It is a matter of re-establishing harmony among all the dimensions of the real. In a certain sense, religions are living entities. Their adherents need to engage continuously in a renewal of spirit by returning to their roots.

3. Globalisation, as a self-imposing, powerful and apparently inevitable system, has intensified conflicts in different parts of the world. It may be providing opportunities for many developing countries, but it must be said that globalisation also means control of economies by giant corporations that are accountable to no community or country. As a result, poverty has become deplorably acute in many parts of the world. Globalisation is also a cultural, social, and even religious pheno-menon. It gives rise to a transnational culture in competition with local cultures. Globalisation succeeds with the help of new communication technologies and consolidation of control over global media by a relatively small number of corporations. The hegemony of global consumer culture requires the relocation of a society's religious traditions to the private sphere. However, the hegemony of global culture is not going unchallenged. The intrusiveness of this global culture and its consumer ethos is being met by the resurgence of traditional identities rooted in ethnicity, region and, especially, religion. Can we see a relationship between the hegemony of global culture and the rise of fundamentalist religious movements challenging the hegemony of global consumer culture, but also rejecting the multi-ethnic, pluralistic traditions of the nation-state: this amounts to a rejection of citizenship and a return to ethnic identity.

Lastly, the secularising power of global consumerist culture pushes religion into a private sphere. This is resisted by religious people, and this resistance to the privatisation of religion often takes the form of a resurgent, militant assertion of religious value and identity. Globalisation tends to separate religions from their traditional relationship with local realities. The result of all this can be found in the rise of religiously motivated violence. Globalisation is disruptive of traditional societies; this leads to attempts to revive religion (understood as nostalgia for a lost sense of community), sometimes in violent forms. The challenge of globalisation can be responded to by ensuring 'a globalisation in solidarity, a globalisation without marginalisation'.

In this sense, the challenging yet also positive side of the process of globalisation is that we now have at our disposal numerous means for offering humanitarian assistance to our brothers and sisters in need, including modern systems of distributing food, clothing, housing and other forms of care. Concern for our neighbour transcends the confines of national communities and has increasingly broadened its horizon to the whole world. Peace and, as its necessary condition, the development of the whole person and of all peoples, are also a matter of religion.

Believers must explore the theme of peace in the context of the integral development of the person and people. Unless one seeks the good of all, peace is placed in jeopardy. Respect for the rights of every human person is the foundation of peace. Of course, there are always rights and duties, flowing directly and simultaneously from the human person's very nature. It is upon the correct anthropological foundation of these rights and duties, and upon their intrinsic correlation, that the true bulwark of peace rests.

The phenomenon of globalisation which is

being imposed without respect to solidarity among all peoples must become a serious concern for all believers. Every believer must ask, 'What will be the effect of the changes taking place? Will everyone be able to take advantage of a global market? Will everyone at last have a chance to enjoy peace? Will relations between states become more equitable, or will economic competition and rivalries between peoples and nations lead humanity towards a situation of even greater instability?'

4. Secularism. Globalisation and secularism are two dominant movements embedded within the fabric of contemporary society and civilisations. 'Religion' implies not just a set of beliefs, but a way of behaving in the world; and this in turn reflects the values upon which people make the decisions and judgements, of everyday life. The essential difference between secularism and religious belief is that secularism conceives that the world in which we live may be understood entirely on its own terms; there is no need to refer to any other point beyond 'history', 'society' or 'the state' in order to understand their meaning and value. No other reference point is required in order to understand one's own purpose and function within it. Secularism has not been forced to see itself through any eyes other than its own. Religious belief, on the other hand, insists that the true meaning and value of life in this world, indeed of the universe as a whole, can be discerned only by reference to some reality that is transcendent to the whole of the universe. It is this element of transcendence which unites all forms of religious beliefs, theistic and non-theistic, as distinct from the secularist world view. The discussion around the word 'secular' must take into account conceptions such as the supernatural.

With the rise of the sociological and anthropological disciplines, religion came to be viewed more and more from within its social, economic, historical and cultural contexts. Earlier, religion was associated with an abstract set of ideas, values or experiences that were seen as separate from the total cultural matrix; later studies on religion have shown that many beliefs, customs and rituals can only be understood in reference to this matrix.

It must also be said that the meaning given to the word 'secularism' in the context of religion has been evolving according to different situations and times. The debate on laïcité in France, sarva dharma-sahishnuta in India or civil rights in the United States of America are not about the same thing, and yet they do have something in common. Often, secularism has essentially meant a process of decline in religious activities, beliefs, ways of thinking and institutions that occurs primarily in association with it. This definition of secularism is linked to the concept of religion, namely, 'beliefs, orientations, attitudes, activities, institutions, and structures, pertaining to the supernatural'. Thus, it is assumed that it is possible to assess the extent to which religion declines or loses significance within the workings of a society.

The debate about secular/secularism, secularity/secularization will undoubtedly continue. I only wish to draw your attention to these two words, namely, religious and secular, which are interrelated and not opposed to each other. The wider society is influenced by religion, but religious institutions and behaviour are themselves increasingly influenced by the values and standards that prevail in a secular society. As society increasingly orders its affairs in accordance with technical and scientific criteria, religious institutions themselves are affected. We see this happening as the distance between sacred and secular appears to diminish.

The relation between religion and society is fundamental to the nature of religion and, according to long-standing intellectual claims, is intrinsic to the nature of society. Religion offers prescriptions for social order, individual behaviour and collective action.

Thus, all religions give expression to the relationship between what is acknowledged and understood to be the most compelling objectives of human life and day-to-day conduct. To a remarkable extent, the religions of the world can be distinguished from each other on the basis of their selective interpretations of this fundamental relationship and in terms of the attitudes toward society that they prescribe and honour. And yet, while the religious traditions of the world can be distinguished from each other on these grounds, they also share some common convictions about this fundamental relationship and what it entails.

Of particular interest in this context is the connection between the concepts of 'sacred' and 'profane'. The word 'sacred' is generally connected with religion and the word 'profane' is often associated with the idea of the secular. A study of religious anthropology shows that, as in the case of the words 'secular' and 'religion', the words 'sacred' and 'profane' are also interrelated, for example, in their earlier usage, 'sacred' referred to ritual performed for the gods and 'profane' referred to the place 'in front of the temple precinct' where the offering was made. Although these two words are not to be confused, one would make a grave mistake by separating them.

Religion has a social function, because the role of the human person in the context of religion is equally important in relation to the Transcendent (because religions claim to be viae salutis) became quite clear following the period known in Western history as the Enlightenment. At the end of the eighteenth century, humanity felt able to ensure for all a peaceful social existence and supreme dignity as an individual. In this period the human being as an individual came to be the focus and centre of concern.

This revolutionary period of history gave birth to what later came to be known as 'Humanism', namely, a new sense of the human person and his problems, a new sense which finds multiform expressions, sometimes opposed but always rich and often very original, a new sense which culminates in human dignity, as a human person being an 'extraordinary' being in respect to all the cosmic order.

Secularisation is related to the answers expected from religion. It implies a transformation of the religious system as it assumes religion's previous function as a form of communication to transform the structures of society.

Secularisation also threatens society with grave dangers, namely, the tendency among some to relativise the eternal truth, particularly through recourse to historical investigation, falling into the error of 'nihilism', which ultimately ends up in a sort of 'totalitarianism' of the ideological world. The complete absolutisation of the act of reason, when brought to its apex and applied to political and religious ideas, does not bring concord and peace but gives rise to atheism, i.e., positive denial of the Transcendent. God then is described as a 'conceptual idol'. In this view, as one becomes an adult in reason, God is done away with; as people become obsessed with the project to emancipate man, religion is seen as the 'opium of the people', and therefore alienated from the structured socio-politico-cultural life of society.

Some tend mistakenly to identify the process of secularisation in the religious context with atheism, agnosticism, indifference to the Transcendent Reality, materialism, and the like. In other words, for

them, religion no longer remains a point of reference that provides ultimate sense to man's life. They then go so far as to make the human person an 'autonomous' being. Here 'autonomy' is opposed to 'heteronomy', which admits a law or a principle coming from beyond the human person. The 'autonomous' man, according to the Greek derivation of the word, gives himself his own law; in particular, he depends neither on the transcendent nor on religion nor on any authority beyond his own where his moral and ethical conducts are concerned).

5. Religious Freedom. Samuel Huntington's thesis is well known: after the 'shock of nationalities' in the nineteenth century, the twentieth century has been characterised by the 'shock of ideologies'. The twenty-first century is said to be marked by the 'shock of civilisations'. Can we adhere to this thesis? I do not think so, for the following reasons. Experience shows that dialogue among religions is desired; the evidence for this is the increasing collaboration among religions. The causes of conflict are not always religious but often economic, political and historical. Religious plurality is an accepted fact, and in today's world this reality is being increasingly brought to our notice. There is a growing desire to meet across religious boundaries in modern society, which has become a 'global village'. In serious circumstances, such as a disaster like a tsunami, this desire is particularly evident. It is increasingly recognised that the things people have in common are more important than what divides them. There is far better mutual knowledge of religions today than ever. The fact of the plurality of religions has also given an opportunity for each religion to re-examine its true nature according to its tradition.

Harmony among religions is imperative for post-modern society. To quote Jayaprakash Narayan (from a vernacular pamphlet):

I cannot think of a greater blasphemy than those crimes that degrade man with the sanction of dharma (religion). Whatever of dharma is left in the present atmosphere of creeping materialism, benumbed ethical sensibility, pseudo-science, and unndigested vulgar modernisation would surely bleed to death if brother continues to knife brother only because he worships God differently.

Selfishness and egocentrism continue to reign in our post-modern societies. The 'other' becomes a cause for fear; this leads to an obsession for security because selfishness and egocentrism cause distrust and suspicion, giving rise to prejudices which then end in hatred, violence and killing. How far can the desire of states to have religion contribute to social peace and harmony be justified? The motives for which states encourage interreligious dialogue are often pre-occupations for security or electoral vote-bank, the first motive being instrumentalised in order to produce the second. Religions, on the other hand, because they are meant to serve as detached critics, and prophets to society do not do what the states expect of them. History teaches us the dangers related to attempts by states to instrumentalise religion, and vice versa. Religions cannot afford to lose their prophetic character of denouncing evil and opposing injustice. They must remember that what they gain in power, they lose in authority. Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics.

Those engaged in dialogue do not change God or the religion they represent. They may change their understanding of God, who transforms them in the course of the dialogue and thus clarifies their understanding. The principle of religious liberty is the cornerstone

of human rights. Thus freedom, for an individual as well as for the community, to profess and practise their religion forms an essential element of a peaceful and harmonious society. Respect for the innate dignity and freedom of the human person is based on the fact that humans are religiously oriented by nature.

We need religious leaders who will accept the principle of religious freedom and communicate it to their respective communities. It must be said that freedom of conscience and religion does not mean relativisation of objective truth, which every human being is morally obliged to seek. The state has no competence, direct or indirect, over a person's religious convictions. It cannot arrogate to itself the right to impose on it or to impede it. The rights of the human conscience are bound only to truth, both natural and revealed. No authentic progress is possible without respect for the natural and fundamental right to know the truth and live according to that truth. The guarantee and the promotion of religious freedom constitutes a 'test' of respect for the rights of others and is realised when the different religious confessions insist on it as part of their teachings, as a guarantee of their respective identities and their freedom. The state may not impose religion, yet it must guarantee religious freedom and harmony between the followers of different religions.

Trying to find the essence of religion means respecting its integrity without reducing any religion to a mere skeleton, or considering any religion to be nothing more than a form of human wisdom. Religious systems have a clearly soteriological character. They claim salvation and liberation for their adherents.

Another question to be asked is this: Is a person's religion to be considered a 'private affair' of that individual? Is it not also a 'public reality'? What is necessary for a modern society is to guarantee that there is freedom to believe, while at the same time encouragement and insistence for the followers of all religions to live together. Legislation cannot achieve this, nor can the state regulate the public expressions of religions (as has been attempted by the 'French Council of Muslim Worship'). Religion cannot be reduced only to a way of worshipping. It is much more than that. Religions also have ethical and social dimensions. The state must favour the art of living together. What must also be taken seriously into account is that no religion, according to its practice throughout the world, is a monolithic block. Rather, every religion is a diversified and complex reality.

The role of religion in contributing to peace and harmony in modern society cannot be underestimated. Religion cannot relegate itself to the background in society. Still, the question is asked: Is religion part of the problem or is it part of the solution in our post-modern society? Religion must come to grips with the realities of the human condition on earth. Religion must meet challenges of alienation and reconciliation, of hurt and healing, of war and peace, lest it become marginal to life. The promotion of hatred, violence and war is the opposite of what true religion is all about. In each religion one hears of a golden rule, namely, do not do unto others what you would not want to be done to you (Hinduism, Mahabharata, 5.15.17; Buddhism, Udanvarga, 5:18; Confucianism, Analects, Rongo, 15:23; Judaism, Talmud, Shabbat 312; Christianity, Matthew 7:12; Islam, The Forty-Two Traditions of an-Nawawi; Rwandan proverb). Religion, to fulfil its true nature, must be an instrument of peace. Religion cannot become a pretext for conflict, particularly when religious, cultural and ethnic identity coincide.

While affirming its fundamental role in society, religion must address the bioethical questions raised by modern science and

technology. Despite the great advances made in science and technology, each day we see how much suffering there is in the world because of different kinds of poverty, both material and spiritual. Scientific and technological progress, especially medical, needs to be praised. But one should not forget that this progress has to be judged always by the criterion of its service in the promotion of life and never its rejection, degradation or destruction. Subjectivism, the mistaken notion of freedom that exalts the isolated individual in an absolute way, is to be questioned. Ethical relativism is precisely this: people think everything is negotiable, everything is open to bargaining, even the first of the fundamental rights, the right to life. The task of accepting and serving life involves everyone, and this task must be fulfilled above all towards life when it is at its weakest.

While people of different religious traditions increasingly feel the need to promote respectful, friendly and harmonious interreligious relations in our war-torn, conflict-ridden and violent world, religious freedom also contributes decisively to producing citizens who are genuinely free; it induces them to take part in their duties with greater responsibility. An essential condition for peace is people's strong moral integrity and religious freedom.

In certain countries legislation has been introduced, or proposed, forbidding 'unethical conversions'. If what is banned is proselytism that is, the use of undue means to bring about conversion to a particular religion then such legislation may be considered justified. If, however, any passage from one religion to another is forbidden, then there is a radical contradiction of a fundamental aspect of the principle of religious freedom.

There is also the question of 'reciprocity', the equal treatment of religious minorities. This concerns first of all the possibility of having places of worship. or even more minimally, the possibility of gathering for worship without being harassed by security forces. It is also not sufficient for the civil authorities to say that people can pray at home. Religion has a communitarian aspect which has a right to find expression in common worship. Religious communities should also have the right to freedom of expression, the possibility to publish materials for the education of their members, and also to import such materials. Furthermore, these communities should have the right to propagate their views to others. There does need to be respect for public order, so it is understandable that the authorities would ban any form of preaching or publication that is disrespectful of the religion of the majority, or indeed of any religious community. It is nevertheless a violation of the right to religious freedom if the communities are condemned to a clandestine existence.

Conclusion

The final message of the Interreligious Assembly held in Rome from 25- 28 October 1999, on the eve of the third millennium, appealed to followers of different religions to collaborate for peace. It declared, among other things: 'We know that the problems present in our society are so big that one cannot resolve them alone. That is why interreligious collaboration imposes upon us with all its urgency.

FAITH, INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND COLLECTIVE ACTION AS THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A PEACEFUL SOCIETY

Dr. Kezevino Aram, President, Shanti Ashram, Coimbatore

It is my honour to join you in this historic event at Gandhi Bhavan in Bangalore to celebrate 75 years of Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. The name of this illustrious institution is dedicated to an apostle of peace, a visionary leader, Mahatma Gandhi, whose impact was not only on our beloved country India but the world at large. Albert Einstein even went on to say, *'Generations to come will wonder if such a man walked on this world in flesh and blood. The power of this thoughts is bound to grow!'.* In 75 years, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi not only worked across India but left an indelible mark in the development and progress of millions of India. It is therefore my equal joy to congratulate the President and Secretary of All India Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and President & Secretary of Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi Dr. Wooday P. Krishna & Shri. Vishukumar in organizing this well curated 75th year celebrations. Allow me to also acknowledge the presence of my co-panellist and a champion of inter-religious dialogue Archbishop Felix Machado. Together I hope we can lift a dimension of Mahatma Gandhi's leadership repository – *Sarva dharma samvad* – or interreligious harmony – as he saw it and practiced it with millions of Indians.

All reasoning ends only in finding Unity; so, we first use analysis, then synthesis. In the heart of things there is Unity still.

Essential Unity that Faith Provides

I would like to start with this extract from Swami Vivekananda's writings of how faith provides a deeper understanding of the underlying unity that binds us all. Religion provides, amongst its many gifts this perspective, one on which humanity can be developed and refined. Without that understanding, there will be no

order in society. And at the core of this order will be a positive drive, a spirituality that is built on the essential unity of man, of life. If this is not recognized by all of us, there will be no order and violence can prey on the socio-economic structure of the 21st century society.

The generation that ushered India's independence was aware of how this rallying thought from faith traditions and interpreted by visionary leaders like Mahatma Gandhi could provide the edifice for modern India. That generation worked hard, found a common calling in the vision of 'Sarvodaya' and co-created a dynamic model of 'Unity in Diversity'. Years later as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, we together have an opportunity to acknowledge the foundational work that the Sarvodaya Movement has been part of. We also have a concrete possibility of renewing it and presenting it as a platform for cooperation for all.

A speaker before me spoke *'about that generation that was born after independence. Prefacing again 'I don't belong to the generation of freedom fighters '.* I too don't belong to the generation that won Independence. I belong to the generation that was born much after Independence. But what we have in common is that we all belong to that committed group of people who are proud to call themselves 'inspired by Mahatma Gandhi', 'Indians' who are committed to take the best of their traditions forward, who want peace for every brother and sister in this society, Sarvodaya - the progress of every man and woman as one's own. This is where I want to look around a little bit and remind ourselves how special this 75th anniversary celebration is. Our distinguished speakers Dr. W.P. Krishna, Mr. Sam Pitroda, Professor Kulkarni and Archbishop Machado all referred to this essential unity and its impact on India and the world. The reaffirmations of this worldview are one that the world needs yet again in the current context.

Confluence of Crisis that confronts the world today

I want to look at three or four pieces of statistics with you that will tell you why our meeting is so important. This year, 2024, has recorded the highest and the greatest number of children affected by violence since after World War II. They are continuing to experience unprecedented violence. Violence in the form of hunger, violence in the form of displacement because of conflicts, violence in the way of being separated from their natural settings of being cared for by their families. Violence in the form of poverty. And we all know that child poverty is very different from adult poverty. The scars of child poverty are irreversible. University after university, whether it is in India or globally, from the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, to Stanford to Oxford to Harvard, tell us if a child lives in poverty, the dissonance in the brain continues through life. So, there is an incapacitation that happens in childhood that leaves them scarred for their adult life.

And therefore, this one piece of statistic compounded by three little other pieces of statistics that I bring to your attention points to a world that is not in order and affects our children, our present and our future in many fundamental ways. This also includes the highest number of conflicts recorded in the calendar year 2024, alongside a worsening of food & nutritional security. Does this confluence affect our thinking and our working? Are we mindful of this and are course correcting or are we conducting, business as usual'?

We know the number of national elections in 2024 is a rise above the normal numbers and includes the most influential countries. It

also means therefore, 'our leaders are preoccupied'. They have to come back to power. And so, some of these devastating problems may not have their complete attention. I share this data and the statistic only to remind you how precious this gathering is of coming together, listening together, taking responsibility and resolving to do more of what we can do is. We can do so ourselves but also together with our governments and like-minded institutions and individuals. The world and today's reality experiencing this 'confluence of crisis' requires us do more and with a deeper commitment to unleashing the transformative influence of collective action.

Witness to the Sarvodaya Gandhian Movement's work in Nagaland: A Lived Example of Sarvodaya

In the midst of this historic celebration, allow me go back to Nagaland, where I was born and raised by two committed Gandhians, Dr. M. Aram & Mrs. Minoti Aram, Appa & Ma as my brother Ashok and I called them. This morning here, at Gandhi Bhavan I witnessed something so moving, the two little boys who have been at the charkha and spinning, Pawan and Ashutosh, reminded me of the 'purpose' of our work. Their silent presence speaks to me as an image of hope and reminds me that if the two boys and their generation have to grow and thrive – there must be peace in this world, there must be social cohesion that enables children to realize their rights, their participation and their unique contributions to our societal functioning today and tomorrow. It also reminds me of my childhood in Nagaland in a little closer way.

I was a young girl growing up in the Nagaland Peace Center. I spent my entire early childhood in the ecosystem of this landmark institution of Kohima. As a child I saw how the central thought in all the leaders who led the Nagaland Peace Centre and its outreach (just like in Gandhi Bhavan). They had meetings after meetings after meetings where 'dialogue, deep, multi-sectoral and trust filled dialogue' defined how people can come together, how the different tribes of Nagaland would come together. The Sarvodaya Gandhian leaders played a major role in setting the agenda for a 'non-violent resolution of the underground problem that had concerns about being part of India'. They arrived at a common goal too through dialogue, 'to resolve the remaining concerns of the Naga people and become 'fully part of India'.

Looking as an adult now, it's interesting now for me to revisit the 'methods that the Gandhian movement adopted to bring 'Peace in Nagaland'.

The first in the methodology adopted was the composition of leaders who evoked trust and represented the goal of conflict resolution by way of experience, vision and expertise. It was no wonder therefore that tall leaders like Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan, a much-loved leader of India, Shri. Nobbo Krishna Chaudhury, the first Chief Minister of Orissa, Shri. Marjorie Sykes who worked with Mahatma Gandhi on basic education and translated the work of Tagore (together with Michael Scott they represented the Quaker movement from England), Shri. B.P. Chaliha, the former Chief Minister of Assam and Dr. M. Aram, a gifted educationist and visionary leader represented the Sarvodaya movement in the Peace Talks with the Underground movement . They all decided the only way to do it was to respect one another's opinions and to meet with faith and continuity and meet till a resolution came. Just like Gandhi Bhavan is next to this seat of power, the Nagaland Peace Centre had a hotline to the Prime Minister's Office and a hotline to the heart of the Chief Minister of Nagaland. After

20 long years of hard work, the Nagaland Peace Accord was signed.

Still the lasting Peace Accord that the Naga people recognized as their own stays, and peace has led to more prosperity in the state. The solution is lasting because it came out of deep dialogue, sustained meetings and mutual respect. But I saw one more thing. That the Indian experiment of 'unity in diversity' found another live example. Annamalai Anna has an exhibition downstairs. Here you will see recorded, the work of the Gandhian movement in Nagaland.

It had a personal impact on me too. It humanized my growth and leadership. I have a Naga name. I always proudly carry my Naga name 'KEZEVINO'. 'Keze' means peace be with you. I carry that because as a young girl like Pawan and Ashutosh, I saw that peace can be actively won and constructed. And peace can be won non -violently! These stories of ground success are not to be read only in the books, but to be seen. Many years later, I had the honour of being the Chief Consultant on behalf of the UN to do the Human Development Report, the first ever Human Development Report for Nagaland. And when I was asked to find a thread for it, I said 'peace building' will be the main focus of this report, elaborating the corelation between peaceful societies and positive development trajectories.

Introducing the Nagaland Human Development Report at the Nagaland State Assembly was a special moment. I will not forget this moment. I was not introduced as a Harvard graduate, as a doctor, a public health expert, not even as the Chief Editor of the Human Development Report. You know how I was introduced? I was introduced as a second generation peace maker. Because I was writing the story of people.

I hope together as we meet, to celebrate 75 years of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, here in Gandhi Bhavan we remember the legacy of peacebuilding that continues in each one of us. Therefore, as Swamiji says that humanity will only be realized or lived or believed in - if we see ourselves as part of the tradition.

Understanding Dissonance: Building Dialogue: Shaping Solutions for a Peaceful world

Half the audience at this 75th anniversary celebration are young people. This is such wonderful convening! These wonderful young citizens will know, like we knew as young people, that peace is possible. And that dialogue, that Archbishop Machado spoke about, the different ways we can dialogue, the dialogue of the mind, the dialogue of life, the dialogue of working together are the gifts for young people to seek and discover, the lasting testimony to Mahatma Gandhi's leadership and his generation's hard work.

- Gandhiji knew for a country of a billion people that very powerful but simple symbolism of inter-religious harmony must be practiced. The inter-religious prayer that Mahatma Gandhi pioneered and is a way of life today in many ways is a well-researched solution, a finding, a discovery of Mahatma Gandhi's generation, that when people of faith come together – prayer itself can be a means to action. As people, when we acknowledge the centrality of faith in people's lives, we also give them respect. In accord, praying, standing alongside each other is a very meaningful way to build teams and execute common programmes. To every young person here, I know 25,000 of you are there in the different campuses and connected with Gandhi Bhavan, may you remember this is not only a symbolic representation of India's diversity, but a meaningful testimony every day that India is home to the greatest number of

religions in the world. Not only that, it is a living testimony that religions can co-exist in peace. To every young person, that is the badge of honour that you want to take forward of mutual respect and communal harmony is one that is relevant to the India of today and world around.

- The other beautiful symbol of the Sarvodaya Gandhian and family is working together – 'Shramadaan' as it is referred too, the gifting of personal time and labour. It is a practiced methodology, that can include all and is something that requires no degrees, but it requires a tremendous search within one's heart, and an overcoming of ego. It is a great equalizer. I have seen leaders after leaders together cleaning their institutional premises, public places and even places of worship. At Shanti Ashram, I must say, one of my favourite moments, is the time we take every Saturday with my staff to clean for 30 minutes together, our campus, where about 100,000 children come every year.
- Shramadaan was deeply understood by Mahatma Gandhi that in an unequal society, in a stratified society, by gender and by caste and many more factors, something had to bring us together as one. We do it every time because when we do so, boundaries break, humility augments and that little ego that comes up is always told everybody has to be part of the story. This is the second example from the Sarvodaya Gandhian family which is another powerful and proven methodology. If this one thing can be brought to our collective work, it will enable inter-generational dialogue in a very different way and involve thousands of young people in an active collaboration for peace. We don't have to be scanning documents all the time, we don't have to be spinning only. Through 'Shramadaan' we will actually be building bridges between hearts – the young child, the growing youth and the experienced elder all will have a role in it. May all Gandhian organizations, including this wonderful Gandhi Smarak Nidhi in Karnataka, be that safe space where we can experience what Subramanya Bharati, the famous poet from Tamil Nadu, said, *Perilya Kudambam*, that notion of *'Vasudeva Kutumbakam'* be realized concretely. The Gandhian movement can do well by integrating these two powerful and simple ways of celebrating inter-religious dialogue in inter-generational settings.

Mahatma Gandhi's example stands ever so relevant in the 21st century

In a strange way, 'exclusivity' is valued more. The indirect consequence of this is not inclusion but exclusion. There are new forms of exclusion today – 'where you study, what you drive, who you work with, which language you speak'. In all this, the eternal example of Gandhiji, has something to offer – to move from exclusion to humanized inclusion.

I want to present to you two closing thoughts. That peace in all its dimensions is something that the Gandhian movement can give to the world. Personal peace which is inseparable from the moral compass, the ethos, the ethics of a person, but also the bigger picture that Gandhiji spoke about which is linked to personal peace. Beautifully, he said, and I quote from my father's book, The Apostle of Peace.

"If one person rises spiritually, the entire society stands to gain and if one person falls, society must believe they are falling together.

This deep sense of connectivity is critical for collective action and transformation of

society for the better. Here technology can have a positive role. It can re-energize our work in newer ways. We don't have to be afraid of technology. Good news can spread, good things can spread. But to all young people, I want to say one more thing that Gandhiji said,

"What you do today will determine your tomorrow".

That was the magic of Mahatma Gandhi. That was the magic of his generation. They acted on what they believed in – thought and action were in alignment.

Every leader that I met in my father's generation were preoccupied by bringing their talent into fruition for the well-being of people. They were never analysing in isolation. They analysed to do something.

So, on this wonderful day when we are celebrating 75 years of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, which had illustrious leaders beginning with the then President of India and the Prime Minister, and the legacy of illustrious leaders now who have taken the time to bring us together as a Sarvodaya-Gandhian family, let us read together Gandhiji's other Talisman:

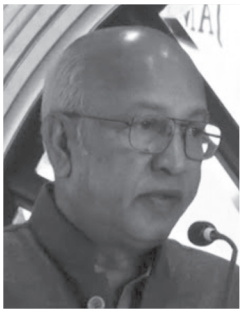
The future depends on what you do today!

May we always remember that this talisman begins with us!

That each of us who are empowered with love, with knowledge, and the gifts of leadership are torchbearers in our own unique way of the legacy and example of Mahatma Gandhi.

GANDHIAN ACTIVITIES IN BANGLADESH

Shri Raha Naba Kumar, Director and CEO, Gandhi Ashram Trust, Noakhali, Bangladesh



Hon'ble Chairman of Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Dr. Wooday P Krishna ji, Distinguished Guests, Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Gandhi Ashram Trust of Noakhali, Bangladesh, I congratulate you all for arranging such an important seminar on "Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century – Building a Global Future of Peace, Justice, Fraternity and Sustainable Development".

Due to the current situation in Bangladesh, I am unable to attend this seminar. I am missing you all and missing the opportunity to learn from you.

I am not an academician but a practitioner. I work at field level and wish to share my experiences with you.

After terrible communal riots, Mahatma Gandhi visited Noakhali from 7th November 1946 to 2nd March 1947. His mission was to restore peace and communal harmony among the Hindus and Muslims of the area.

During Gandhiji's visit, a camp was opened at Ramgonj Upazila in present Lakshmipur District (previously it was under Noakhali district) to coordinate Gandhiji's peace work at Noakhali. After Gandhiji left Noakhali for Bihar, the camp was shifted to the present campus of Noakhali which was donated by Barrister Hemanta Kumar Ghosh to carry out the activities of Gandhi Peace Mission initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. Presently Gandhi Ashram Trust is a well-known humanitarian organization in Bangladesh.

After Partition of India and Pakistan, all the activities of the peace mission were closed down, due to lack of funds, manpower and security. Many Gandhians who came for peace mission activities left Noakhali after Partition, and especially after the assassination of Gandhiji. Those who remained at Noakhali, such as Charu Chowdhury, Viswa Ranjan Sen, Reddipalli Satya Narayan,

Madan Mohan Chattapadhya and many more, were under huge pressure to leave the country. When they refused to do it, they were kept in jail, for several years, before being pushed out of East Pakistan. All the landed properties of the Gandhi Ashram were forcefully occupied by some local land-grabbers, with the connivance of the local administration. Other Gandhian Ashrams, such as the AVOY Ashram of Comilla, and the Munshirhat Khadi Prathisthan in Feni District were burnt and smashed to the ground in 1971. During the liberation war of Bangladesh, four Gandhians were killed by the Pakistani army with their local collaborators, when they were engaged in prayer.

After Independence of Bangladesh, the Gandhi Ashram Trust was reconstituted by the government with a Board of Trustees. But it took some time for it to formally launch its operations. From the early 1980s, the Gandhi Ashram Trust started rural development activities. During the last three decades, Gandhi Ashram is working for peace, non-violence, communal harmony and promotion of human rights and good governance at grassroot level, along with other development programmes. Presently, it is working directly with 1.2 million families in five coastal districts of Bangladesh. Doing humanitarian work is very difficult in the present context in Bangladesh.

The Bangladeshi people have faced many communal atrocities in many times in various forms. The minority community has faced communal violence in 1946 before the Partition of India; in 1965 after the India-Pakistan War; in 1971 during the Liberation War of Bangladesh; in 1975 after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman; in 1992 after the demolition of the Babri Mosque in India; and even before and after every Parliamentary election. The violence that takes place ultimately turns into communal violence. It should be mentioned here that during our liberation war in 1971, not only the minority community but also millions of people from Muslim community were killed by the Pakistani army and their local collaborators. The indigenous hill people are also facing threats for so many years. The Christian community, the Buddhist community and other small minority groups regularly face such atrocities.

It is to be noted that each and every time, all the atrocities were done in the name of politics and religion.

Considering all these issues, Gandhi Ashram Trust has taken some initiatives for peace, communal and social harmony among the people of different religions. A few of them are listed below:

1. Year-round campaigns among the students of different schools, colleges and universities all over Bangladesh. Till date, we have covered more than 1000 institutions.
2. Response and support to the victims.
3. Regular meetings, seminars and workshops with religious leaders of different religions.
4. Working with Local Government institutions to promote Human Rights and Good Governance.
5. Organizing popular theatre shows to make people aware of the different kinds of violence.
6. Organizing joint cycle rallies with India for peace.
7. Arranging Youth Exchange programmes with different countries.
8. Organizing International Youth Peace Camps. Last year, 300 youth participants from 18 different countries attended and exchanged views on religious harmony.

9. Meetings with the leaders of different political parties, civil society organizations, think tanks, policy makers, etc.
10. Writing newspaper articles.
11. Arranging Round Table meetings with media personalities, etc.

Ladies and gentlemen, today's South Asia, as indeed today's world, confronts complex issues. Truth lies fractured, one bit of it here, one bit there. Today's wrong-doer was the wronged one yesterday. In South Africa, for Gandhi, the problem was clear: racism was wrong; it was evil. Even when he fought the British Raj, the broad issue was clear. But today, we have a vast zone of grey.

However, Mahatma Gandhi showed us the path. We should remember the seven social sins which are the root cause of all evil. Those are as follows:

- Politics without principle;
- Education without character;
- Commerce without morality;
- Science without humanity;
- Wealth without work;
- Pleasure without conscience; and
- Religion without sacrifice.

If we wish to change the world, we will have to change ourselves. Gandhiji emphasized this: “Be the change you wish to see in the world”.

Finally, I want to present a quote from our national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. He stated:

“He who has faith in his own religion,

Who realises the truth of his religion,

Can never hate the other's religion."

Thank you all for listening to me. And thanks, again, to the Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi.

Jai Jagat.

SESSION 6

GANDHI, GLOBALIZATION AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

GLOBALIZATION AND GANDHI

Mr. A. Annamalai, Director, National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi

At the beginning of the 1990s, India, like many other countries, underwent a profound policy shift. This transition, commonly called the LPG model—representing Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization—was designed to integrate the Indian economy into the global market, enabling it to connect, coordinate, and compete with rapidly developing and developed economies worldwide.

In 1991, India faced a severe balance of payments crisis, which compelled the country to deposit 47 tons of gold with the Bank of England and 20 tons with the Union Bank of Switzerland. To address this crisis and stabilize its economy, India engaged in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF's intervention led to a series of systematic economic reforms, including the liberalization of equity markets to attract overseas corporate investors, the promotion of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the reduction of import duties, and the reorganization of international investment regulations.

Globalization has woven a complex web of interconnectedness, whereby events and decisions made at great distances increasingly shape our lives. This process renders many of the traditional borders and boundaries between countries less relevant, highlighting the deep interdependencies in the global economic landscape.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS:

Certain basic assumptions were propagated while entering into globalization and liberalization. It was believed that it would impact on the following:

- **Employment Opportunities:** Globalization can lead to increased job creation through the expansion of international trade and investment.

- **Steady Growth of GDP:** By opening up markets and encouraging investment, globalization can contribute to steady economic growth.
- **Income Distribution and Growth:** Theoretically, income should be distributed more broadly as economies grow due to globalization.
- **Standard of Living:** With economic growth, there is often an improvement in the standard of living. This can be seen in increased access to goods and services, better infrastructure, and improved healthcare and education.
- **Poverty Reduction:** By stimulating economic growth and creating jobs, globalization can potentially reduce poverty. As people gain employment and incomes rise, poverty rates can decrease.
- **Globalization as a Panacea:** Globalization can offer significant benefits and a powerful engine for economic development and social progress. It is considered as a cure-all for socio-economic issues of the Third World countries.

RESULT OF THREE DECADES OF GLOBALISATION:

Between 1990 and 2022, India experienced an annual income growth rate of approximately 3.6%, a period that was marked by a substantial increase in national wealth. During this time, the aggregate wealth-to-income ratio of India significantly escalated, rising from 3.83 in 1995 to 5.75 in 2022. This increase indicates a notable accumulation of wealth relative to national income.

A prominent facet of this wealth accumulation is the burgeoning number of high-net-worth individuals. According to Forbes billionaire rankings, the count of Indian individuals with a net worth exceeding USD 1 billion grew dramatically from a single individual in 1991 to 52 in 2011, and further to 162 by 2022.

Moreover, the proportion of these individuals' total net wealth relative to India's net national income experienced a remarkable surge. In 1991, their combined net wealth constituted less than 1% of the country's net national income. By 2022, this share had escalated to approximately 25%. This trend underscores a significant concentration of wealth among the elite, reflecting broader shifts in wealth distribution and economic disparities within the country.

These observations suggest a dynamic interplay between income growth, wealth accumulation, and rising economic inequality, warranting further analysis to understand the implications for economic policy and social equity in India.

INCOME AND WEALTH INEQUALITY IN INDIA 1922-2023:

The World Inequality Lab Report, 2024 concluded with a grim estimate and mentioned that such high levels of inequality in income and wealth can lead to social and political unrest in the country. “As per our benchmark estimates, the billionaire raj headed by India's modern bourgeoisie is now more unequal than the British raj headed by the colonialist forces. One reason to be concerned with such high levels of inequality is that extreme concentration of incomes and wealth is likely to facilitate disproportionate influence on society and government. This is even more so in contexts with weak democratic institutions,” it said.

The study reveals that economic inequality in India has reached its highest levels since the colonial period under British rule. Historical data indicates a significant shift in income distribution over the decades. Specifically, the share of national income

allocated to the top 10% of earners declined from 37% in 1951 to 30% by 1982. However, this trend reversed from the early 1990s onwards, with the share of national income held by the top 10% increasing markedly over the subsequent three decades. By the most recent years, this share has approached 60%.

In stark contrast, the income share of the bottom 50% of the population has experienced a concerning stagnation. According to the study, this segment received only 15% of the national income in the 2022-2023 period. This stark disparity highlights the growing income inequality and raises critical questions about the equity of economic growth and wealth distribution in contemporary India. The study underscores the need for comprehensive policy interventions to address these inequalities and ensure more equitable economic outcomes.

ACCELERATION OF WEALTH CONCENTRATION: At the turn of the 21st century, in 2002, the disparity between wealth and income concentration among the top 10% of earners in India was pronounced. The wealth share of the top 10% stood at 57.1%, while their income share was 42.1%, resulting in a gap of 15 percentage points. Over the next 20 years, this gap narrowed significantly, with the income share of the top 10% rising at a faster rate than their wealth share. By 2022, the gap had effectively halved to 7.3 percentage points, indicating a closer alignment between income and wealth concentration at the upper end of the distribution.

Conversely, a contrasting trend is observed among the top 1% of earners. In 2002, the top 1% held 25.4% of national wealth compared to 16.7% of national income, resulting in a wealth-income gap of 8.7 percentage points. By 2022, this gap had widened significantly, with the top 1% controlling 40.1% of national wealth versus 22.6% of national income, creating a gap of 13.4 percentage points.

INCOME AND WEALTH INEQUALITY IN THE SHORT RUN 2002-2022:

EFFECTS OF CONCENTRATION OF WEALTH: The increasing concentration of wealth in India, particularly among the top 1% and the top 10% of earners, carries significant implications for the country's socio-political landscape. As wealth becomes increasingly concentrated, it is likely to facilitate disproportionate influence over societal and governmental processes. Such concentration of economic power can undermine the democratic fabric of the nation by enabling the wealthy elite to exert greater control over political decisions and public policy.

This dynamic is likely to weaken democratic institutions, as the interests and priorities of a small, affluent segment of society may overshadow those of the broader population. When economic power translates into political influence, it can erode the principles of equality and fairness that are central to democratic governance.

Furthermore, the integrity of various key institutions in India—such as the judiciary, regulatory bodies, and public agencies—may be compromised. The increasing influence of wealthy individuals and entities could lead to the undermining of institutional norms and practices, resulting in weakened governance and diminished public trust.

The recent trends suggest a troubling possibility: the slide toward a plutocracy, where political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of a wealthy few. This shift poses a significant risk to the democratic and equitable functioning of Indian society, highlighting the urgent need for reforms to address the growing disparities in wealth and ensure that democratic

institutions remain robust and representative of all citizens.

EMPLOYMENT: LIVING WITH DIGNITY:

The interplay between globalization, technological advancement, and employment trends reveals critical insights into the current labour market dynamics, particularly in developing economies like India. Globalization has increasingly favoured capital-intensive, labour-saving technologies, leading to a shift in modern manufacturing units. These units are investing more heavily in automation and technological advancements rather than in human resource development.

This shift has significant implications for employment. According to an employment survey by the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), total employment in India remained 7.8 million below pre-pandemic levels between January 2020 and January 2022. Additionally, the labour force participation rate declined by approximately 3.0 percentage points over the same period, reflecting a contraction in the active workforce.

This trend is further exemplified by the recent highly qualified people who applied for low-skilled positions, like Peon, Watchman, Driver, etc. For instance,

- In the Uttar Pradesh Police Department, a staggering 93,000 candidates applied for just 62 peon positions, with a large number holding advanced degrees such as Ph.D.s, postgraduates, and graduates, despite the job only requiring a minimum qualification of V Standard.
- In the Uttar Pradesh SSC MTS recruitment examination, 55 lakh applicants, including those with M.Tech, M.B.A., and M.Sc. degrees, applied for 'Group D' posts like peon, watchman, and gardener.
- In Madhya Pradesh, 11,000 applicants, including B.E. graduates, M.B.A. holders, and Ph.D. aspirants, competed for just 15 vacancies for peons, drivers, and watchmen.
- In Gujarat, a more 'developed' state than UP., MP., Bihar, in the June 2022 competitive exam, 17 lakh applicants appeared for 3,400 posts, where the minimum qualification was only X Standard.

These examples highlight a growing disconnect between the qualifications of job seekers and the nature of available employment opportunities. The increasing prevalence of advanced degrees among applicants for low-skilled positions underscores the mismatch between educational qualifications and market demands.

RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT 2008-2024:

If you carefully read the statistics related to the rate of growth of unemployment, you can see a steady growth in the rate of growth of unemployment after Covid 19 Pandemic.

ECONOMIC EVENTS IMPACTING THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN INDIA:

Economic events and policy decisions significantly impact unemployment rates in India, reflecting the complex interplay between global trends and domestic policies. Key events and policies include:

a. Global Financial Crisis (2008-2009): The global financial crisis had an impact on the Indian economy, affecting employment across various sectors. While India was less affected than many advanced economies, the crisis still led to reduced economic growth, lower industrial output, and job losses, particularly in export-oriented industries and the IT sector. The subsequent slowdown in global demand impacted Indian businesses and employment opportunities, contributing to a temporary increase in unemployment rates.

b. Demonetisation (2016): The demone-

tisation policy, which involved the withdrawal of high-denomination currency notes from circulation, had immediate and severe impacts on the Indian economy. The sudden cash crunch disrupted daily economic activities, particularly in the informal sector, which relies heavily on cash transactions. Many small businesses, which are major employment providers, faced significant operational challenges, leading to job losses and increased unemployment, especially among lower-income and unskilled workers.

c. Goods and Services Tax (GST) Implementation (2017): The implementation of the GST, it is told, aimed to streamline the tax structure and enhance compliance. However, the transition period was marked by challenges, including complexities in tax compliance and adjustments to new regulations. For many businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the initial difficulties in adapting to the GST regime resulted in operational disruptions and, in some cases, job losses.

d. Covid-19 Pandemic (2020): The Covid-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruptions to the global economy, with severe impacts on India's labour market. The pandemic-induced lockdowns and restrictions led to widespread job losses, particularly in sectors such as hospitality, tourism, and retail. The informal sector, which employs a significant portion of the workforce, was especially hard-hit, with many workers facing layoffs and reduced income. The economic slowdown during the pandemic led to a sharp rise in unemployment rates and highlighted the vulnerabilities within the Indian labour market.

e. Inflationary Pressures: Inflationary pressures, driven by factors such as rising commodity prices and supply chain disruptions, can adversely affect employment. High inflation erodes real incomes and purchasing power, leading to reduced consumer spending and potential cutbacks in production and hiring by businesses. In the context of rising inflation, companies may delay or reduce hiring, affecting overall employment levels and potentially exacerbating unemployment.

ADVERSE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION:

Globalization, while often associated with economic growth and increased interconnectedness, also carries several adverse impacts that can affect economies, societies, and individuals in various ways. Here are some key adverse effects of globalization:

a. Increased Income Inequality: Globalization can exacerbate income inequality both within and between countries. While it can lead to economic growth and higher incomes for some, it often benefits the wealthy and those with high skills, leaving lower-income and less-skilled workers behind. This disparity can lead to increased social and economic inequalities, as the gains from globalization are not evenly distributed.

b. Job Displacement: The shift towards global competition can lead to job losses in certain sectors. Industries that cannot compete with cheaper imports or more efficient foreign producers may shrink or shut down, leading to job displacement for workers in those sectors. This is particularly notable in manufacturing industries in developed countries, where jobs are outsourced to lower-cost regions.

c. Exploitation of Labor: In pursuit of lower production costs, companies may move operations to countries with less stringent labor laws and lower wages. This can lead to the exploitation of workers, including poor working conditions, low wages, and lack of job security. Such practices are often seen in developing countries where labor regulations are weaker.

d. Environmental Degradation: Globalization can contribute to environmental harm as companies increase production to meet global demand. The quest for cheaper resources and labor often leads to overexploitation of natural resources, deforestation, pollution, and higher carbon emissions. This can exacerbate climate change and damage ecosystems.

e. Cultural Erosion: The spread of global culture can sometimes overshadow and erode local cultures and traditions. As global brands and media dominate, traditional practices, languages, and cultural identities may be marginalized or lost, leading to cultural homogenization.

f. Economic Vulnerability: Globalization can make economies more susceptible to global economic fluctuations. Countries that are heavily integrated into the global economy may experience greater volatility and risk during global economic downturns, financial crises, or trade disputes.

g. Undermining Sovereignty: Increased global integration can challenge national sovereignty as countries may have to conform to international regulations and agreements that impact their domestic policies. This can limit the ability of governments to implement policies tailored to their specific needs and circumstances.

h. Increased Competition and Pressure on Small Businesses: Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may struggle to compete with large multinational corporations that benefit from economies of scale and global market reach. This increased competition can lead to the closure of local businesses and a reduction in local job opportunities.

I. Health Risks: Globalization facilitates the rapid spread of diseases and health risks across borders. The increased movement of people and goods can contribute to the spread of pandemics and other health crises, as seen with the Covid-19 pandemic.

j. Social Dislocation: The rapid changes brought about by globalization can lead to social dislocation. Communities and workers facing job losses or changes in their economic conditions may experience stress, reduced quality of life, and social unrest.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE:

The statement of Abby Maxman, C.E.O. and President of Oxfam America, highlights a critical issue in the discussion of global inequality: the normalization of extreme disparity, which is not merely a by-product of economic systems but is systematically perpetuated. "We must stop normalizing extreme inequality," summarizes Abby Maxman. "This is not by accident, but by design." This concept aligns with Dr. Johan Galtung's notion of 'structural violence', a term used to describe systemic inequalities and injustices embedded within social structures and institutions. Structural violence refers to the harm inflicted on individuals and groups by the institutionalized inequities that prevent them from accessing resources and opportunities, thus perpetuating poverty and social exclusion.

KEY ASPECTS OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE:

a. Economic Inequality: The unequal distribution of wealth and resources across different social and economic strata. This often results in persistent poverty, inadequate access to essential services, and limited opportunities for marginalized groups.

b. Social Exclusion: Systemic barriers preventing certain groups from participating fully. This can include discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, leading to social marginalization and exclusion.

c. Institutional Bias: Policies and practices within institutions that favour certain groups over others, contributing to ongoing disparities and reinforcing the power dynamics that perpetuate inequality.

PERCOLATION THEORY AND GROWTH:

'Percolation Theory' posits that economic growth is a panacea for various societal issues, including poverty. The theory suggests that as the economy grows, benefits will eventually trickle down to all levels of society, including the poorest. However, real-world evidence challenges this assumption, revealing that growth does not always equate to equitable improvements in living standards.

When the existing development model led us to devastation, we need to explore alternative economic models. Gandhi, though he was not an Economist in the traditional sense, gave a viable alternative for production and equitable distribution.

GANDHIAN ECONOMIC MODEL:

The Gandhian economic model offers a distinctive approach to addressing poverty, hunger, and inequality by emphasizing moral and ethical principles in economic practices. This model is grounded in the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated for an economy that prioritizes human welfare, sustainable development, and equitable distribution of resources. Here's a detailed exploration of how the Gandhian economic model seeks to achieve its goals:

a. Adequate Supply of Basic Needs: The Gandhian economic model emphasizes meeting the basic needs of all individuals, including food, shelter, and clothing. Gandhi believed that economic systems should ensure that every person has access to these fundamental necessities, which he viewed as essential for a dignified and fulfilling life.

b. Reduction in the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Gandhi's economic philosophy advocates for reducing income and wealth disparities to promote social justice and equity. He argued that extreme wealth inequality undermines social harmony and human dignity.

c. Reduction of Regional Disparities in the Pattern of Development: The Gandhian model seeks to address regional imbalances by promoting balanced development across different regions in a decentralized way. Gandhi believed that development should not be concentrated in a few areas but should be spread across all regions to reduce disparities.

d. Preservation of Acceptable Environmental Quality: Gandhi's economic vision includes a strong emphasis on environmental stewardship and sustainable practices. He believed that economic activities should not come at the expense of environmental health and should aim to maintain a balance with nature.

e. Enhance the Quality of Life of the Common People: Improving the quality of life for ordinary people is a central tenet of the Gandhian economic model. Gandhi emphasized that economic progress should be measured not only by material wealth but also by the well-being and dignity of individuals.

f. Empowerment: Empowering indivi-duals and communities through education, healthcare, and social services to enhance their overall quality of life.

GANDHI'S ECONOMICS:

Gandhian economics presents a distinct and holistic approach to economic development, emphasizing the importance of people-centred processes over technology-centred ones. It advocates for a model of production and distribution that prioritizes the well-being of individuals and communities, decentralizes

economic power, and promotes sustainable and equitable growth. Here's a deeper look into the key aspects of Gandhian economics:

a. Vibrant and Ever-Widening: The Gandhian economic model envisions an economy that is dynamic and inclusive, catering to the diverse needs of people at different levels of society. It emphasizes the importance of creating a vibrant economic environment that adapts and grows to benefit all.

b. People-Centred and Not Techno-cantered: Gandhian economics prioritizes human welfare and well-being over technological advancement for its own sake. While technology can be beneficial, it should serve the needs of people rather than drive economic activities solely for efficiency or profit.

c. Production by Masses and Not Mass Production: Gandhi advocated for "production by the masses" rather than "mass production." This concept emphasizes involving the general population in production processes, rather than relying solely on large-scale, centralized industrial production methods.

d. Decentralized Production: Promoting decentralized production systems that allow for more local control and reduce dependence on large, centralized manufacturing units.

ECONOMIC EQUALITY:

Gandhi said, "Economic equality is the master key to non-violent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands has concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other."

CONCLUSION:

The Gandhian economic model provides a framework for addressing poverty, hunger, and inequality through a holistic and ethical approach. By prioritizing the adequate supply of basic needs, reducing income and wealth disparities, addressing regional imbalances, preserving environmental quality, and enhancing the quality of life for all, the model aims to create a more just and sustainable society. Although implementing Gandhian principles in a modern context may pose challenges, the underlying values of equity, sustainability, and human welfare continue to offer valuable insights for contemporary economic and social policy.

Bibliography

- Bharti, Nitin Kumar and others (2024): Income and Wealth Inequality in India 1922-2023: The Rise of the Billionaire Raj, Working Paper No.2024/09, World Inequality Lab
- Das, Ratan (2005): The Global Vision of Mahatma Gandhi, Sarup & Sons, New Delhi
- Gandhi, M.K., The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi
- Gangrade, K.D. (2008): Gandhian Perspective on Global Interdependence, Peace and Role of Professional Social Work, Authors Press, Delhi
- India Inequality Report 2023: https://www.oxfamindia.org/knowledgehub/workingpaper/survival-richest-india-story
- Kumar, Anand (2011): Understanding Globalisation and Emerging India, Palm Leaf Publications, New Delhi
- Kumar, Anand and Jena, Pradeep Kumar (2016): Gandhian Way in the Era of Globalisation, Winshield Press, New Delhi
- Reddy, A. Ranga (2009): Gandhi and Globalisation, Mittal Publications, New Delhi

GANDHI'S PASSIONS: A LIFE OF LIMITS AND LOCAL AUTONOMY

Prof. Chandan Gowda, Ramakrishna Hegde Chair Professor of Decentralization and Development, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru

Gandhi expressed a confident and consistent scepticism against a very powerful vision of what it means to be modern. To the worshippers of big technology, he cautioned that that would displace human labour and destroy community life. To those who celebrated cities as places of freedom, he responded that cities promoted vice. Elaborated with passion in Hind-Swaraj (1909), the Gandhian worldview offers a powerful alternative to the liberal vision of the modern world that the British propagated in India as part of their civilizing mission.

A cynical politics has taken hostage of international relations in the present. Genuine idealism is difficult to find on the world stage. Diplomatic efforts with respect to overcoming the very real threat of climate change lack a moral urgency. Climate change has not seen governments make sincere efforts to address it even inside their countries. The recent ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas came at the end of fifteen months of relentless military violence. Tens of thousands of innocent Palestinian lives had already been lost by then. One wonders what Gandhi might have done to seek peace in the region had he been in our midst today. Whatever he might have done, he would not have remained indifferent or passive.

In the contemporary world, where a large and opaque financial system controls the global economy, and where the states have become overgrown, a restlessness haunts individuals and communities. What is the restlessness about? It is about the state of our environment. People are noticing that the weather these days is not what it used to be. They are nervous about the food they eat. They are also nervous about the loss of community life. Whether you are in a big city like Bengaluru, or in a small village, you sense that things are spinning out of control, and that you matter less and less in how things are evolving. This restlessness seeks answers opening up scope thereby for genuine politics, for hope.

The Gandhian ideal of gram swaraj, or local autonomy, envisions communities who remain in control over how their lives are shaped. The erosion of local autonomy can even count among the driving forces of right-wing mobilizations. In a recent British film, *The Old Oak (2023, Dir: Ken Loach)*, which revolves around the settlement of Syrian refugees in a formerly prosperous mining town, a local resident asks why these refugees were not being settled in rich neighbourhoods of the country. This remark is revealing of how the British government has gone about the settlement process. It has resorted to a top-down decision where the residents of the locality picked for refugee resettlement have not been involved. The old-time residents are also resentful about investors from abroad buying up local houses. Amidst the very serious problem of racist intolerance, the film shows that a sense of unfairness about the government's role also drives local resentment against the resettlement of refugees in their town.

Gandhi's refusal to view urbanization as progress is of course integrally linked with his ideal of local autonomy. In his classic book, *The Unsettling of America (1977),* Wendell Berry, the American farmer and poet, points out the destructive attitude of the US agriculture department policy that prescribed that "the surplus population" from rural America be shifted to cities since the share of agriculture in the country's GDP was declining. Fifty years later, the planning documents of the Indian government make similar observations and claim that there are too many people living in villages and that the excess population be given new employment skills and transferred out to cities. This incorrect view of urbanization as progress usually finds a ready endorsement among the country's intelligentsia.

The image of an urban India, where 50 % of Indians will live in cities in 2050, etc. is thrown around constantly, and this statistic appears natural and inevitable whereas it is in fact riding on a spurious claim. What appears a settled fact could prove to be otherwise with robust policies aimed at rebuilding both rural and urban livelihoods which then pushes the future in multiple directions, and not in the sole direction of total urbanization. Villages have always been dynamic, and not frozen, social worlds. Extraordinary creativity and innovations are found in rural India amidst difficult circumstances in the present. Setting aside the cliches of an urban future for the country, exploring ways of restoring the vitality in rural communities has great moral urgency today.

Gandhi's clear-eyed insistence that humans live a life of limits and his refusal to accept the vision of a human as a pleasure-maximizing being are a precious moral legacy. The worldview of modern societies asks that we be guiltless consumers. Sports stars, film stars and businessmen, among other celebrity figures, are seen embracing this way of being in the world which furthers the idea of humans as individual beings without a responsibility to other individuals and communities. The self-focused consumerist ideals loom large over the moral horizons of the younger generations. Limitless consumption, for Gandhi, was a modern pathology. Asking that humans master their passions, and live a life of restraint, he conveyed that human activity unfolded within a community and was imbued therefore with moral responsibility towards others. In emphasizing the necessity of self-mastery, he aligned his anti-colonial struggle with the saintly traditions of India which valued the spiritual pursuit over the pursuit of worldly power, and curbed the cultural tendencies towards the authoritarian worship of political power.

In his foreword to Hind-Swaraj, Gandhi

notes that the views found in his book "were held by many Indians not touched by what is known as civilisation." He was clarifying that the ideas and moral values he valued were living among the vast majority of Indians who were not swayed by modern culture. A century later, the values that don't approve of an ostentatious life, a self-indulgent life, are still a vital presence in the country. Self-restraint is still prized. Our intellectual and activist work does not however show an awareness about them or engage them substantively. The educational system and the media stay aloof from the great many moral conversations that extol the virtues of austerity, simple living, self-sacrifice, compassion, among other humanistic values, in India. In the conversation between the Editor and the Reader in Hind Swaraj, the former tells the latter: "Those in whose name we speak we do not know, nor do they know us. I would certainly advise you and those like you who love the motherland to go into the interior that has yet not been polluted by the railways, and to live there for six months; you might then be patriotic and speak of Home Rule." This response still holds true for the Indian intelligentsia which does not engage "illiterate" people in their work. An engagement with living humanistic imaginations renews grassroots democracy.

If the chief activist demand is that wealth be distributed in egalitarian ways, it evades the radical vision of Gandhi. Because the twin demands for wealth creation and its equitable distribution misses his primary commitment to the continuation of a moral community, which then allows for equality and freedom to be imagined and practiced in non-violent ways, in ways that do not destroy the moral bases of communities. Let us take an illustration. "With an increase in wealth, all societies see an increase in garbage" - a social scientist could take this observation to be objective and valid across societies. For Gandhi, this idea that with wealth, people will want to consume more than less reveals the limits of the ideals of egalitarian distribution of wealth since that ideal does not by itself guarantee that people will not become rapacious consumers which weakens the moral bonds of communities, not to mention the deepening of the ecological crisis. The Gandhian vision of a community as a family or an ashram, where the members belonging to it act as if the individual wellbeing is inseparable from the community wellbeing, will not see the equation of increased wealth with increased garbage as a natural or an inevitable one and instead view the conditions supporting that equation as socially harmful.

Restoring autonomy to local level arrangements in an age of fast globalization is not an easy task. But the effort needs to be made without delay. Seeking local autonomy is not a matter of turning away from the government. The state needs to be engaged wherever and whenever necessary for furthering democratic politics, but all faith cannot be reposed in the state. Creative constructive solutions must be explored outside the state. Indeed, Gandhi's steadfast indifference to think like a political scientist of the state drew from his view that if individuals and communities changed their ways of life, the nature and character of the state would also change.

Gandhi's struggles show a care for evolving a non-violent, constructive politics. In response to the rising violence against Muslims, Dalits and tribal communities, Gandhi might have evolved a struggle - alongside his cherished work of encouraging communities to participate in each other's religious life worlds and cultivate a *"heart unity (sadbhavana)"* between themselves – around rights-based constitutional activism. Gandhi extends a fertile ground for political creativity in the present.

GANDHI DOES NOT NEED US; WE NEED HIM

Prof. Akbar Ahmed, Chair of Islamic Studies at American University in Washington DC

The topic at hand is the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas in the 21st century. There are three key points to consider.

Firstly, the 21st century seems to present a bleak outlook, especially in the eyes of many influential thinkers of our time, such as Bernard-Henry Levy and Henry Kissinger. They emphasize the devastation caused by climate change, the potential risks of artificial intelligence, and the increasing political violence fueled by ethnic and religious conflicts. Mayor Shimer refers to this as the "great power rival"—the growing misery of ordinary lives overshadowed by the vast resources and political might of powerful nations. In such a context, the humility and compassion embodied by Mahatma Gandhi are more relevant than ever. Amidst all this turmoil, or perhaps because of it, many commentators warn that we might be sleepwalking into a third world war, one that could potentially end human civilization as we know it.

My second point is that to alleviate the widespread gloom and misery of our times, the world desperately needs universal philosophies that can embrace the diverse sections and complexities of human societies. It is in this context that the ideas and example of Mahatma Gandhi become especially relevant. His principles of Ahimsa (nonviolence), Shanti (peace), Seva (service to others), and Satyagraha (nonviolent struggle for justice) are among the most powerful and relevant aspects of his philosophy for the modern world. For me, these values embody his teachings, and they are not confined to any one faith or community.

One of the clearest examples of this inclusivity is Gandhi's embrace of the Muslim community. This is what, to me, makes him a true saint. Gandhi went out of his way to

show respect and acceptance for minorities. For example, he wrote the foreword to a book about the life of the Prophet Muhammad, read from the Holy Quran in his morning prayers, and chanted his favorite hymn that included both Ishwar and Allah.

Even after the devastating partition in 1947, Gandhi's inclusive embrace of humanity remained evident. He declared that he would spend three months of every year in Pakistan, as he believed that the people of both India and Pakistan were equally dear to him. In a remarkable gesture of respect, Mr. Jinnah instructed his staff to accord Gandhi full protocol, similar to that of a head of state.

Perhaps this very commitment to peace and unity contributed to Gandhi's assassination, but this, too, is what, in my eyes and in the eyes of millions, makes him a hero for the ages. Gandhi presents us with what I call the "Great Indian Paradox." If a true aristocrat is to be defined by courtesy and good manners, then Gandhi was no less than the most refined of India's princes and maharajas. His legendary respect and courtesy, shown even in times of acrimony and division, reflect an extraordinary grace. Whether writing a foreword to a book about the Prophet of Islam or addressing Mr. Jinnah, his political opponent, by the title of "Quaid-i-Azam," Gandhi demonstrated the highest level of respect and humility, setting an example that transcends time and borders.

My third point is to ask ourselves: what are the principles of Gandhian behavior that we need to remind ourselves of today? What can we extract from a life so rich in meaning and wisdom? Despite the shameful attacks on his reputation online, what we truly need to share and propagate are the great Gandhian virtues of Ahimsa (nonviolence), Shanti (peace), and Seva (service to others). This is why conferences like this are so crucial—not just for India, but for the world. The world desperately needs these Gandhian values now more than ever.

When we heard of Gandhi's assassination, Mr. Jinnah issued an immediate message of condolence, describing the Mahatma as "great" four times. He stated that the Muslims of India had lost their greatest supporter. Both Gandhi and Jinnah, despite their political differences, would have been heartbroken to see the current state and predicament of minorities in their respective nations. To my mind, the reconciliation of these two great leaders of history is the inevitable destiny of the subcontinent. This reconciliation holds the potential to bring peace and harmony to this vast and troubled region, one that is central to the world's future.

This is why my latest play, Gandhi and Jinnah Return Home, concludes with the final scene of these two giants of the subcontinent embracing and acknowledging each other. Gandhi says, "He is correctly called the Quaid-i-Azam," and Jinnah replies, "He is indeed the Mahatma."

Our South Asian subcontinent, in the last century, elevated the Mahatma to an iconic status but then forgot his true message. We must all work together to revive the essence of his teachings for the 21st century. Gandhi does not need us; we need him.

Thank you.

NON-VIOLENCE IN CHINA

Prof. Quanyu Shang, Professor, School of Foreign Studies, South China Normal University

It is a great honor to be invited by the Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi to virtually participate in this significant International Seminar on the theme "Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century – Building A Global Future of Peace, Justice, Fraternity, and Sustainable Development" in commemoration of the 75th year of the Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi.

On this occasion, I would like to say something about Mahatma Gandhi's Non-violence for building a peaceful society. As we know, Non-violence is advocated in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. In its Hindu, Buddhist and Jain contexts, non-violence (that is, Ahimsa) stands for non-injury to living beings. Gandhi uses this phrase, but gives it a totally different new meaning. Gandhi refines its meaning by applying the term to human and social interactions especially, and by introducing the positive connotation of Ahimsa as love. For Gandhi, non-violence involves not only the negative connotation of refraining from doing injury to any living being either physically or mentally, but also the positive connotation of extending the love which one naturally has for one's near relations to all humankind, including one's personal enemies. It includes the positive connotations of affection, compassion, sympathy, mercy, generosity, service and self-sacrifice, as well as the negative ones of non-injury and non-harm. In other words, in its positive form, non-violence means largest love, greatest charity. Non-violence as love is regarded by Gandhi as a universal principle on which the very existence of the world and human society depend. As he said "Though the social structure is not based on a conscious acceptance of non-violence, all the world over. Families are bound together by ties of love and so are groups in the so-called civilized society called nations." Therefore Non-violence as love is the law of the human

species, just as violence is the law of beasts. Non-violence as love is not the weapon of the weak but of the strong and brave. It is a moral and soul force, which means to oppose material force with spiritual force, to oppose physical force by soul-force, to conquer hatred with love, to return good for evil, to move others with self-suffering and self-sacrifice.

Gandhi lived in an age full of violence, which made him seek non-violence as the remedy. Today, the situation in the world is almost the same as in Gandhi's time, if not worse. Violence and conflict still threaten world peace and humankind's existence. Gandhi's remedy is still valid - or rather more urgent and necessary in today's world. Violence can not prevent violence; on the contrary, it can only accelerate it. No other way but non-violence can bring peace to the world and welfare to humankind. It is only through non-violence that the salvation of humankind is possible. So we should fall back upon the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence as love. Actually Gandhi's doctrine and application of non-violence not only had a strong influence on the Indian independence movement and the 20th century's world as he lived, but also has a far-reaching influence in the 21st century's world including China after his death.

Quite often, many of my Indian friends ask me a question: being a Gandhian scholar, what do you think is the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi to today's China? With this question in mind, since 2012 I have been researching the topic on Gandhi Studies in China over a century-long saga from 1920s to the 21st century. I've written an article “The Relevance of Mahatma Gandhi to China in the 21st Century: Some Cases for the magazine India-China Chronicle (published in November-December, 2019, pp.1-9.), which consists of 4 parts: Mahatma Gandhi's Autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi's Non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi's Simple Living & High Thinking, Mahatma Gandhi's Pursuit of the Public Good. Here, I would like to share the second part: Mahatma Gandhi's Non-violence with you:

Mr. Bei Ye, a Chinese writer, scholar, expert of community issues, under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence, applied Gandhi's non-violent approach to residential community governance so as to safeguard the legal rights of the residents in the community. He put forward “a slogan for maintaining legal rights in 2006, i.e. non-violence and cooperation by which to make contributions to the building-up of a harmonious society”. He wrote, “Mahatma Gandhi created miracles by his spirit of pursuing Truth via 'Non-violence and Non-cooperation' and defeated the powerful British Empire by using peaceful method. We have derived such an inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi as follows, i.e. in the process of building up harmonious community, our slogan is to pursue social justice via Non-violence and Cooperation. We are now in a historic transformation period, so we can only create our new life via mutual understanding and caring, via non-violence and cooperation.”

In Mao's era, there was no such kind of issues in China, because at that time all estate properties belonged to state and government and every one lived in his or her own working unit's apartment by paying very little rental fee. The department of estate properties of the working unit took responsibilities for maintaining it. All people lived in their own working unit's apartment buildings. But in post-Mao's era, especially in late 1990s and early 21st century, all working unit's apartments were sold to employees and many more people bought their apartments in newly-built residence community areas and moved out of their working unit's apartments. Newly-built

residence community areas were resided with people from different working units and property management company took responsibilities of maintaining all estate properties (that is, apartments). So a new kind of conflict appeared between property management companies and property owners in its early stage.

On March 1, 2006, CCTV made a TV program "News Probe: the story of property owners' maintaining their legal rights". Mr. Bei Ye was one of the three interviewees who were either current or previous heads of three different residence community areas in Beijing. It was said that when it came to the topic concerning property owners' maintaining their legal rights, one could not help having pictures of contradictions and conflicts between property owners and property management companies -estate property developers occur in mind: there were many court cases and some violent incidents.Why residence community areas became battle fields rather than places to live in peace?How to maintain property owners' legal rights when violated? What are the ultimate aims of maintaining property owners' legal rights?

In Mr. Bei Ye's opinion, his act of maintaining property owners' legal rights is a scholar's civil experiment. He starts from claims for his own and his neighbor's legal rights, and gradually moves on to focus on public affairs within his residence community, and finally upgrades to ponder over issues of maintaining legal rights of the whole society. Every week, he organizes a virtue education seminar in his apartment, discussing topic concerning virtue education. He believes that virtue education is an integral part of civil education, and the cultivation of awareness of civic obligations is the indispensable prerequisite for maintaining property owners' legal rights.

Through non-violent action (such as talk, negotiation), the conflict between property management companies and property owners is resolved peacefully. Mr. Bei Ye's residence community is awarded an excellent one in Beijing. Nowadays there is seldom news about violent incidents in residence community areas.

Mr. Bei Ye keeps on promoting Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts. In his articles published on website, he wrote, "I believe we can learn a lot of meaningful things from Mahatma Gandhi and India's modernization road, especially some substantially spiritual things, just like our ancestors' did when they went to India to get Buddhism. Mahatma Gandhi is our mentor, and his spirit is a good remedy for China's society. Those who are longing for the recovery of humanity and progress of soul can get inspiration and strength from Gandhi's works. I hope to organize a Gandhi Fans' Club on my website so that we can keep in touch and exchange ideas."

This is what Mr. Bei Ye did in earlier 21st century in China.

VALEDICTORY SESSION

GANDHI SMARAK NIDHI : NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Dr. Sanjoy Singha, Secretary, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi

I extend heartfelt congratulations to all the people of Karnataka, to all Kannadigas, for defeating communal forces in the last Assembly elections. You have given hope—not just to Karnataka but to the entire country—that it is possible to overcome communalism and to restore and re-establish democratic values in India. To every Kannadiga, whether present here or elsewhere, I offer my deepest gratitude and salute your spirit.

Coming from the North, the stark difference in the political and social scenario when entering the South is palpable. There's much we need to learn from the South's approach, resilience, and values.

The Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi was established in 1948, just 14 days after Gandhi's assassination. It was formed by our leaders of the time as a forum—a network to carry forward his vision and responsibilities. This legacy reminds us of our enduring responsibilities. We aren't celebrating our 75th anniversary; we are reflecting on our work and purpose.

Post-1948, Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi took on a massive challenge: the rehabilitation of migrants displaced during the partition of India, particularly from Bangladesh, East Pakistan, and Pakistan. This critical work was carried out in Punjab, Haryana, Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Assam, the northeastern regions, and even Madhya Pradesh.

The scale of this effort was monumental. We rehabilitated countless individuals, creating peaceful settlements, including Sindhi colonies in many towns and cities. This effort stands as a testament to our dedication and the peaceful nature of the work. It is a legacy we are proud of, and it showcases the important role we played during that turbulent time in history.

Following this, there were other significant challenges that we undertook. One such major task was addressing the issue of leprosy, a disease that had severely affected India. To tackle this, the Gandhi Smarak Leprosy Foundation was established. Over four decades, we worked tirelessly to minimize leprosy cases, and by the 1990s, the government officially declared India free of leprosy as a public health problem.

Many might dismiss leprosy as a simple disease, but it carried a deep social stigma. When Gandhi began working with Parchure Sastri, leprosy patients were ostracized, labeled as untouchables, and referred to by derogatory terms like "Leipar" and "Kauri." Gandhi's efforts emphasized dignity, rights, and the humanity of those affected, breaking down this stigma. Today, we take pride in having contributed not only to India's fight against leprosy but also in extending our expertise to Southeast Asia, Iran, and other countries to help them combat the disease.

Another notable achievement was our involvement in restoring peace in the Chambal and Bundelkhand regions during the late 1960s and early 1970s. From 1969 to 1974, the notorious dacoits of Chambal and Bundelkhand surrendered their arms. Even the government had struggled to resolve this crisis, and it was Gandhi Smarak Nidhi volunteers who stepped in, starting dialogues with the dacoits in 1962. After years of persistent efforts, peace was restored in these regions, marking another milestone in our journey.

Similarly, the Bhoodan movement was another area where we played a pivotal role. This initiative, which sought to redistribute land to the landless, became a major milestone in promoting social justice and equity.

During times of national crises, such as the wars of 1962 and 1971, as well as earlier in 1952, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi stepped up to support the nation. In 1962, when the conflict in the northeast shook people's faith in the state, particularly in the border areas, our workers and volunteers worked tirelessly to restore confidence among local communities. By gaining their trust and standing alongside the Indian soldiers, they played an integral part in protecting the borders and uniting the people with the nation.

Another significant contribution was our work to address the issue of manual scavenging. From the 1960s to the 1970s, over 7 lakh toilets were built as part of our efforts to eradicate this inhuman practice. At a time when these issues were neither widely recognized nor discussed, we took the initiative and made substantial progress. This work later influenced the creation of policies to tackle this problem on a larger scale.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Trustee, played a significant role in guiding our early efforts. He sent a group of individuals to Japan to study advanced techniques for sowing paddy. Upon their return, we implemented these techniques in Andhra Pradesh, the coastal regions, and the northeast, introducing modern methods for paddy cultivation and upgrading crop yields.

This highlights the multifaceted role of Gandhi Smarak Nidhi in addressing the needs of the country—not just in agriculture but in various domains. Even in the crucial task of re-establishing democracy, the Nidhi played an important part. During the Emergency period, more than 200 of our workers were jailed for standing up for democratic values. Despite the imposition of the Kudhal Commission, we faced it with humility and resolve, staying true to our principles.

Today, we discussed globalization and its impact, particularly the LPG era—Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization. After the 1990s, we adjusted our policies and programs to address the changing socio-economic landscape. For instance, Gandhians actively participated in anti-big-dam movements and rights-based movements from the 1990s to the 2010s. Movements like the Chipko movement and other environmental and social justice efforts were led by Gandhians, reflecting our commitment to grassroots activism.

In the past decade, our focus has been on re-establishing democratic values amid growing challenges. Numerous institutions and principles have come under attack. A glaring example is the demolition of the Sarva Seva Sangh campus in Varanasi. The combined forces of Modi and Yogi orchestrated the bulldozing of this historic Gandhian institution. They sent a force of more than 800 police officers, targeting Gandhian workers and even imprisoning them. This happened both during the day and at night, highlighting the intensity of the crackdown.

Additionally, they seized the Sabarmati Ashram and manipulated other Gandhian institutions, turning them into tools of their agenda. These actions mirror the broader assault on democratic values and the systematic targeting of those who uphold them.

Before us lies a significant challenge, and we have already begun preparations to address it. We are working towards developing a team of 500 young workers, with Kumar Prashanth taking a leading role in organizing training programs and related activities. Soon, we will announce our future initiatives.

The Gandhi Smarak Nidhi has made remarkable contributions in the realm of publications, having published over 1,000 books on Gandhiji and his philosophy. This includes around 100 titles in Kannada, as well as several books in Odia, Assamese, and other regional languages. Additionally, the Nidhi established a Gandhi Film Division, producing 4-5 notable films that capture Gandhian ideals.

We have also established several Gandhi museums across the country, including those in Delhi, Kolkata, Bapu Kutir in Wardha, Madurai, Sabarmati, Mumbai, and more recently in Patna. A noteworthy example is Mani Bhavan in Mumbai, where Gandhiji once stayed. When the house was put up for sale, the Central Gandhi Smarak Nidhi stepped in to preserve this historic site. Despite limited funds, the Nidhi, with the support of common people and workers, managed to purchase it, underscoring the collective commitment to safeguarding Gandhiji's memory.

Today, Mani Bhavan stands as a significant museum, preserving the legacy of Bapu. If you ever visit Mumbai, you are warmly invited to experience this remarkable space dedicated to Gandhiji.

With these words, I conclude my thoughts. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, especially its esteemed members and Chairman, Sri Wooday P. Krishna ji. His unwavering support made this event possible. Known across India for his decency, simplicity, and inspiring leadership, he has been a constant source of motivation.

I am also deeply grateful to Prof. Shivaraju ji, a close and long-standing associate, for his guidance and support. Special thanks to Vishu Kumar ji, who devoted immense time and effort to ensure the success of this conference, especially in its final stages. I would also like to thank MC Narendra ji, Dinesh ji, Jeevan Kumar ji, and other members and office bearers of the Nidhi for their contributions.

A special note of appreciation goes to Sudheendra Kulkarni ji and all others who extended their support to this endeavor. Finally, I would like to thank the Karnataka government, particularly the Honorable Chief Minister and the Minister of Law, Sri H.K. Patil ji, for their invaluable support.

We deeply appreciate the cooperation and hospitality we have received here in Karnataka. Organizing an event of this scale in Uttar Pradesh would have been far more challenging—not because we lack courage, but because we recognize the need to learn from the South. This experience has been enlightening, and we hope to carry these lessons forward as we take our efforts to the North.

Thank you.

INCULCATION OF HUMAN VALUES

Hon'ble Justice N Santosh Hegde, Former Judge Supreme Court of India and
Former Lokayukta of Karnataka State

Talking further about Mahatma Gandhi might feel redundant, as his legacy and principles are well-known to all of us. However, when I was invited to deliver the valedictory address, I reflected on what would be most appropriate. I thought about how Mahatma Gandhi envisioned a value-based society—one that is people-friendly and humane. With this in mind, I decided to speak about the fall in social values and the consequences of this decline.

I have had the privilege of working in many positions throughout my career, but it was only when I joined the Karnataka Lokayukta that I realized the true scale of the suffering faced by the people. Before this, I had felt somewhat isolated, like a frog in a well, unaware of the real challenges that most people were facing. I was comfortable in my own world, and I mistakenly assumed that most others were too. But as I became involved in the system, I discovered that many were suffering, and shockingly, this suffering was often caused by an institution—the administration.

I am not a politician, and I have never been one, but I couldn't help but wonder why this was happening in a country like ours, a country that is traditionally rich in moral and social values. It was then that I realized that the fault doesn't lie with individuals, but with the society itself in which we live.

When I was young, my parents instilled in me the dos and don'ts of life. If anyone in our village was sent to jail, we were not allowed to visit their house. This was not a punishment handed down by the courts, but rather a social conviction. It wasn't just the person who committed the mistake who suffered; the punishment extended to the entire family. This was the kind of society that made people think twice before committing wrongs, as they feared the social consequences.

But unfortunately, things have changed dramatically today. Society now places great value on money and power, and little else. As a result, there is an intense and often reckless race to become wealthy and powerful. There is nothing inherently wrong with striving to become rich or powerful, as long as one does so through the right means. However, when these ambitions lead to dishonesty—when people resort to stealing or exploiting others—that is where the problem lies, and that is the challenge we are grappling with today.

So, what's the way out of this situation? What is the cause of all this? I believe the root cause is the development of a disease called greed. I use the term "disease" deliberately because this greed has no limits—it is insatiable. No matter how much one accumulates, it is never enough; the desire for more, more, and more is constant. This greed is not confined to any one sector of society; it has infiltrated nearly every part of our society, touching every field and profession.

To illustrate this, consider the following examples of massive scams that have plagued our country. There was the Jeep Scam, where the country lost 52 lakh rupees in the import of Jeeps for the military. Then came the Bofors Scam, where 64 crore rupees were lost in the procurement of weapons for our soldiers. The Commonwealth Games scam cost the country a staggering 70,000 crore rupees. These figures are not mine; they were reported by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India.

Then, there was the 2G Scam, where 1,76,000 crore rupees were lost. Following that, we had the Coal Scam, which caused the country a loss of 1,86,000 crore rupees. Most recently, there was the Rafale Scam, which resulted in a loss of over 58,000 crore rupees. These are just some of the big ones, and each one of these represents a single instance in time. But if we were to tally up the total amount lost across thousands of such scams in just a decade, the figure would be astronomical.

In 1985, our late Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi made a public statement in which he said that out of every rupee allocated for development, only 15 paise reached the intended project. We are now in 2024, and unfortunately, the greed has not diminished. How much do you think actually reaches the intended project today? I will not venture to guess, but I leave that question for you to ponder.

What is the development that is happening in our country, and where are we headed? Will there ever be peace in society, as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi? Will there be solidarity, or will it just be a mad rush for wealth? These are pressing questions we need to consider, because no law or policy can truly prevent the disease of greed. There is no pill or medication that can cure it, but the way out is rooted in social values—values that our elders established for the benefit of society. Without these values, we are doomed to continue down this destructive path.

Even in times when greed existed in society, our elders put systems in place to promote values like contentment. But contentment doesn't mean giving up on ambitions or aspirations. It's not about getting a degree, a job, and then simply retiring from life. Every individual should have the ambition to become something significant, to earn wealth through honest means, and to use that wealth to contribute positively to society. There is nothing inherently wrong in becoming rich, as long as it's done legitimately and ethically, with a sense of responsibility. Spend your money wisely, support charitable causes, pay your taxes—this is how we create a positive cycle in society.

However, contentment is something that cannot be bought; it must be developed internally. When I was young, my parents

taught me the dos and don'ts of life. I learned about morality and values in school through subjects like moral science, which reinforced the lessons my parents had taught me. Today, many parents face pressures in their professional lives, bringing their workplace problems home and spending little time with their children. In many cases, children are given devices like iPhones, which provide little guidance on social values. There is a glaring gap in this value system, and this gap exists because of changes in social habits.

To have peace and solidarity in society, we must change this. We must change not only for ourselves but for the generations to come. The way we are approaching wealth creation today will never lead to peace or harmony. There will always be friction, and eventually, revolutions. And in revolutions, no one truly wins.

I am certain that Mahatma Gandhi would never have tolerated the kind of greed that has overtaken society today. Greed can be curbed if we nurture values like contentment within ourselves. When you are happy and satisfied with what you legitimately have, then the problem of greed ceases to exist. The moment we begin to seek more by depriving others, that's when the issues start. People who are deprived of what is rightfully theirs will eventually stand up, leading to conflict and unrest.

For a peaceful future, for solidarity and contentment, we must hold on to these values. Humanism, too, is a crucial value. We are not born human beings by default; as per science, we are born Homo sapiens, a species with no inherent moral or ethical values. Humanism is something we must consciously cultivate and exhibit in our lives. As poets in Karnataka have said, "Whatever you want to become in life, first and foremost, become a human being."

I have visited over 1,833 educational institutions, and in every one of those places, I convey a powerful message to the students: "Even if you are not born as a human being, if, in the journey of your life, you acquire humanism and die as a human being, there is no greater glory than that." To truly become a human being is one of the most significant achievements in life. Without humanism, you can never truly be human, and without humanism, there can be no peace or solidarity in society.

You must ask yourself: How will you live your life? Do you think that acquiring money in a wrongful manner will bring you happiness? Just a few months ago, I was watching a television report about a very powerful person whose house was raided. They found 252 crores of rupees bundled up and stashed in cupboards. This money is tainted—it can never be considered your own, because it was not earned through legal means, it was not taxed, and it was not kept in a proper bank account. How do you think you would feel if you were in that person's shoes? Do you think such individuals can sleep peacefully at night? No. They live in constant fear—fear of being raided by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), fear of income tax raids, and even fear of robbers breaking in. What future can their children expect in such a scenario?

The truth is, there will never be happiness in that kind of money. If you do not have happiness, how can you claim to be a human being? Money, when acquired in the wrong way, will only bring fear, anxiety, and restlessness, never peace. The only path to true peace and happiness is through humanism—living a life of integrity, compassion, and respect for others. Without this foundation, society will remain fractured, and individuals will remain in the clutches of greed and fear. True wealth lies in contentment and righteous living, not in the accumulation of ill-gotten gains.

I have witnessed many instances that highlight the deep struggles people face in our society due to the absence of basic values and

humanity. Let me share a few of these examples with you.

In 2008, a handicapped tailor and his wife brought their six-month-old child to my office. The child appeared perfectly fine, but the parents explained that the child had no rectum and could only eat and defecate through the mouth. They had taken the child to a local doctor who advised them to visit a specialty hospital, where a pediatric surgeon might be able to help. They took the child to a government hospital, where the pediatric surgeon examined the child and said that he could perform the surgery, but it would cost a substantial amount of money. The parents, despite being in dire financial straits, begged, borrowed, and scraped together what they could. They gave the money to the doctor, who counted it and then informed them that instead of fixing the child, he would create a hole near the rib cage, and the child would have to wear a bag for the rest of her life.

Fortunately, the parents didn't accept this. They took the money back and brought the child to the Lokayukta office. We took the child to a hospital on Old Airport Road, where we begged the doctors to perform the surgery, which they did. Today, that child is a 16-year-old girl, studying for her SSLC exams. The doctor who had initially turned away the child had prayed for his education, for a government job, and for the chance to help others. He had everything, but greed led him to deny this child a future. This is the impact of greed on society.

I also recall the case of an 85-year-old woman who came to me with her problem. She had no income, and her son, who worked in Mumbai, sent her 250 rupees via money order. The postman, however, demanded a 10% commission on this meager amount. Although I had no jurisdiction over the postman—who was a central government employee—I contacted the relevant officer, who explained that he had no staff to handle the situation. Eventually, the police intervened, and the issue was resolved. But the suffering of the elderly woman stayed with me. This is not about political parties or individuals; it is about the suffering of the people in our society. How can we forget the basic humanity that should unite us all?

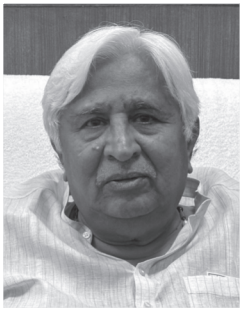
I also remember the heartbreaking story of Harish Nanjappa, a young man who, in 2011, was riding his motorcycle on the outskirts of Bangalore when a lorry with a punctured tire ran over him, severing his body into two pieces. Despite his severe injuries, Harish was still alive and pleaded with the bystanders for a little water. But not a single person helped him; they only filmed and took pictures. Eventually, the ambulance arrived, and as the medical staff put his body parts into the vehicle, Harish, still conscious, requested that his eyes be donated. This was not just a story—I have records of this incident. Later, I was invited by Zee TV to give an award to his mother, who had displayed incredible courage in the face of such a tragedy.

These stories are not fabricated; they are real instances of people who suffer while others stand by, indifferent or caught up in their own lives. There are people who have these values, but society often does not respect them. Society may label them as 'useless' or 'selfish' when, in truth, they are often the ones who embody the best of humanity. This is the challenge we face today.

If we could only inculcate values like compassion and humanism in our children and grandchildren, I believe we could return to the kind of society Mahatma Gandhi envisioned—a society where development does not come at the cost of our morals and values. Without these principles, no matter how much progress we make, we will never achieve true peace and solidarity in society.

INTROSPECTION AND THE WAY FORWARD

Shri H.K. Patil, Hon'ble Minister for Law & Parliamentary Affairs,
Legislation and Tourism, Govt. of Karnataka



The valedictory session of the international seminar featured an inspiring speech by Justice Santosh Hegde. The program overview was presented by Dr. Wooday P. Krishna, President of the Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi. The event's success was ensured through the dedicated efforts of Central Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi President Ramachandra Rahi, the dynamic and young Sanjoy Singha, Working President Vishnu Kumar, and Hon. Secretary Narendra, who were all present on stage.

In the audience, several prominent individuals added to the significance of the event. True Gandhian Sudheendra Kulkarni chose to sit humbly in the last row, while Prasanna, known for his contributions to the weavers' community and his Gandhian lifestyle, was also among the audience. The presence of Kumar Prashanth, a close associate of JP, further elevated the seminar's stature, making it an even more meaningful gathering.

Sanjoy Singha's address highlighted a critical issue: the need to protect the properties of Gandhi institutions. Known for his boldness, Sanjoy has fearlessly spoken out against the government and communal elements in Uttar Pradesh, and now he has openly addressed the pressing matter of safeguarding Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi properties.

Reflecting on Gandhian ideals, he reminded us of Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan movement, where millions of people voluntarily donated their land. Yet today, we find ourselves struggling to protect the very properties entrusted to Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi. Sanjoy, with great passion, recalled how Gandhi once called upon the dacoits of Chambal to surrender, and they did so, laying down their arms and other possessions, moved solely by Gandhi's appeal. This remarkable event underscores the enduring power of Gandhi's ideas.

However, I would like ask a critical question: while we use Gandhi's iconic spectacles in advertisements and keep his memory alive symbolically, aren't we facing a proliferation of “dacoits” in a metaphorical sense—especially in spaces adorned with Gandhi's images? What's your view on this? This isn't just about politicians. What's happening within the administration? What kind of governance are we providing, whether at the central or state level? These are questions that demand serious introspection.

In the past, corruption often operated in a specific pattern—officials would identify errors in applications and then demand money from people to resolve them. With those ill-gotten funds, they might have constructed buildings or purchased luxury items like cars. However, the nature of corruption today has evolved significantly, and its image has also transformed.

Now, we are witnessing direct and unprecedented forms of misappropriation. For example, funds are being transferred directly from government accounts to personal accounts—those of the corrupt officials themselves, their sons, daughters, sons-in-law, or close associates. This shift represents a stark departure from the traditional methods of corruption we have seen over the years. Such brazen acts of financial misconduct within the administration are alarming and were almost unheard of in the past.

The reason I bring this up is that Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi must reflect on its role in this changing landscape. Merely organizing seminars or discussions, while valuable, may not be enough to address these deep-seated issues. The Nidhi needs to rethink its approach and consider realigning its focus to have a more tangible and direct impact on society. It must explore innovative strategies to inspire people and influence them toward Gandhian principles, particularly in combating corruption and promoting ethical governance.

In the past, various movements have emerged to combat corruption and malpractice, but many of them were short-lived, ending abruptly for a variety of reasons. However, today we are confronted with far greater complexities and challenges in tackling these issues.

For instance, the Supreme Court recently exposed a ₹16,000 crore scam involving a political party, revealing details about where the funds were transferred. While we commend the judiciary for its boldness in bringing such matters to light and informing the public about what is happening in the country, this alone is not sufficient.

Shockingly, the same Supreme Court chose to dismiss the case, reasoning that since the individual involved is no longer alive, there is no need to pursue the matter further. This approach is akin to saying that because the victim has already died, we should simply abandon a murder case. Such decisions undermine accountability and set a dangerous precedent.

We are making grave errors in our judiciary, politics, and administration. If these trends continue unchecked, they will lead to serious, widespread problems. It is imperative that we engage in critical and thoughtful deliberation to address these issues effectively and ensure that such failures do not persist.

Let me give you an example. We often speak grandly about Gandhiji and his principles, yet look at the irony of the situation today—a temple has been built in honor of Godse, the man who assassinated him. People are being transported to this temple in organized bus tours. This stark contradiction highlights the state of our values and priorities.

Among Gandhi's principles, the one closest to his heart and central to India's independence—and indeed, the principle that gave him global recognition—is Satyagraha. Gandhi understood that the British could not be defeated through force, as they possessed far superior weapons, bullets, and bombs. Engaging in violent confrontation would only lead to mass slaughter, with people dying like sheep.

Instead, Gandhi believed in the power of Satyagraha—a nonviolent means of resistance. Through this principle, he could connect with people, build a mass movement, and eventually achieve independence. Satyagraha was not just a strategy; it was a moral force that also sensitized the world to India's struggle. It was through nonviolence and fasting, grounded in truth and justice, that Gandhi created a path to freedom.

Today, however, that very principle of Satyagraha is under threat. It's not just about forgetting Gandhi's values—it's about actively undermining them.

Justice Santosh Hegde is well aware of these developments. Under the old Section 309 of the IPC (Indian Penal Code), it was stated that anyone who attempted to commit suicide, or performed any act leading to such an attempt, would be punished with simple imprisonment for a term that could extend to one year, or with a fine, or both. This provision remained in place for many years.

Now, under the newly introduced Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the corresponding section states that anyone who attempts suicide with the intent to compel or restrain a public servant from discharging their duty shall face simple imprisonment for a term of up to one year, or a fine, or both, or be assigned community service.

This change has significant implications. It effectively means that people engaging in hunger strikes—often a key component of Satyagraha—can now be booked under this law. Earlier, the law focused on individuals attempting suicide as a personal act, but now, even peaceful protests involving hunger strikes can lead to punitive action. For example, if someone stages a hunger strike at a Gandhi Circle to raise awareness or demand justice, they can immediately be detained by the police.

This alteration fundamentally undermines the essence of Satyagraha, which is built on the principles of nonviolent resistance and moral persuasion. It essentially criminalizes a method of protest that Gandhi himself championed and that played a pivotal role in India's independence movement.

Those who believe in Gandhi's principles and ideals, including the Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, must raise their voices against this law. It is disheartening to note that apart from Karnataka, no other state government has opposed this provision. How can we accept a law that directly curtails a citizen's right to peaceful protest—a cornerstone of democracy and a Gandhian legacy?

Through this seminar, I want to bring this pressing matter to the attention of the President of India and other concerned authorities. It is imperative for us to question this law and advocate for its reconsideration to preserve the sanctity of nonviolent resistance and Satyagraha.

Yesterday, Tushar Gandhi voiced his deep concern over the encroachment of the Sabarmati Ashram, highlighting a critical issue that demands immediate attention. While numerous discussions and seminars are being conducted, it is time to take concrete action by demanding a dedicated law for the protection of Gandhian properties.

We already have laws in place for the protection of Waqf properties, and similar legal frameworks exist for safeguarding cooperative institution properties. Why, then, do we lack a robust policy to protect properties associated with Gandhian institutions?

The Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi is, in essence, a government-patronized organization, though there has been a historical debate about whether it should remain independent or refrain from accepting government grants. However, the fact remains that the President of India has served as the President of Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, and the Prime Minister has taken on the role of Vice President, illustrating the close ties between the Nidhi and the government.

Given this unique relationship, it becomes even more imperative to address the encroachments and threats to Gandhian properties—whether they belong to Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, Gandhian institutions, or Khadi Gramodyoga.

Through this international seminar, we must pass a resolution demanding legislative protection for these properties and take the necessary steps to ensure their preservation. This is not merely about safeguarding land or buildings; it is about protecting the legacy and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, which these institutions symbolize. Let us work together to turn this concern into action.

We need to think big and take bold actions. Justice Santosh Hegde, in his address, highlighted numerous scams and raised a poignant question: Do the people behind these scams lose sleep over their deeds? The harsh reality is that they sleep well, while society continues to lean towards and support wealth, no matter how it is acquired. We are at a critical juncture, facing tough challenges that demand revolutionary steps and profound introspection.

One such step could be for Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi to identify ten individuals involved in major scams and confront them directly. Surround them with accountability, and extract a commitment that they will cease their corrupt practices and refrain from encroaching upon properties or exploiting resources. Such an action could set a revolutionary precedent and send a strong message about the necessity of ethical governance and accountability.

Our work must go beyond discussions; we must focus on transforming society and improving people's lives. Only by doing so can we truly carry forward Gandhi's principles and ideas. This is the path to making initiatives like this seminar truly meaningful and impactful.

We are fortunate to have individuals like Carl Malamud here with us, someone inspired by Gandhian values. Carl came all the way from the United States, seeking Gandhi Bhavan, to digitize Gandhi's works and writings. His efforts have resulted in the digitalization of over one lakh pages and the uploading of 11,000 books on a public website. It's remarkable that, despite being a nation of 1.35 billion people, we did not conceive such an idea—yet Carl did, inspired by Gandhi's legacy.

The success of this seminar is a testament to the collective efforts of all the members of the Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi and the Central Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi. Their dedication has made this event a beacon of hope and action. Thank you once again for your unwavering commitment and contributions.

ENDURING RELEVANCE OF MAHATMA GANDHI - HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Dr. Wooday P. Krishna, President, Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi

Inaugural Speech

The Honorable Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri Siddaramaiah, inaugurated the International Seminar on "Mahatma Gandhi for the 21st Century." In his inaugural address, he underscored the enduring significance of Mahatma Gandhi's ideology, highlighting its relevance beyond the 20th century and in today's world. The Chief Minister asserted that the proponents of caste inequality were responsible for Gandhiji's assassination and lamented the impact of the caste system, which has historically denied education to marginalized communities, deepening societal inequalities.

Siddaramaiah ji drew attention to the importance of Gandhi's principles in addressing contemporary challenges, emphasizing that his teachings remain a universal guide for fostering justice, equality, and peace. He also reflected on Stephen Hawking's words, stating that humanity need not seek happiness or tranquility on distant planets but should instead cultivate the values of mutual tolerance, coexistence, and fraternity on Earth.

Chief Guest's Address

Shri H.K. Patil, in his address, highlighted the significance of the International Seminar on Mahatma Gandhi and commended the delegates for their active participation in promoting Gandhian values. He acknowledged the importance of the seminar in instilling these principles and congratulated all those involved for their commitment.

Shri Patil gave special recognition to Mr. Carl Malamud, who, inspired by Gandhian ideals, played a pivotal role in digitizing over 11,000 books related to Mahatma Gandhi and making them accessible through the Internet Archive. This monumental effort, he noted, has helped preserve and

disseminate Gandhi's teachings to a global audience. Shri Patil also expressed his gratitude to the Honorable Chief Minister Shri Siddaramaiah for his unwavering support in the estab-lishment of Gandhi Bhavans across 25 districts in Karnataka, furthering the spread of Gandhian thought in the state.

Presidential Remarks

Shri Ramachandra Rahi, in his Presidential remarks, reflected on the founding of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, which was originally proposed by the Indian National Congress. He emphasized that this institution was not established by the government, but by the collective will of the people, with the aim of promoting Mahatma Gandhi's values and philosophy. Through the Nidhi, these ideals have been deeply ingrained within society.

Shri Rahi underscored the need for a strong relationship between society and the state to build a better and more just nation. He invoked the memory of Vinoba Bhave, revered as the first satyagrahi of India's freedom movement, who envisioned a non-violent and equitable social order across the country. Concluding his remarks, Shri Rahi called for the generation of people's power to protect and uphold the essence of democracy, reinforcing the Gandhian belief in the strength of collective action.

Keynote Address: Shri Tushar Gandhi

In his Keynote Address, Shri Tushar Gandhi expressed gratitude to the Honorable Chief Minister, Shri Siddaramaiah, for his steadfast support in advancing the work of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. He remarked on Gandhiji's remarkable ability to persuade and inspire people, a strength that seems increasingly rare in today's world.

Shri Tushar Gandhi urged the younger generation to familiarize themselves with Gandhi's principles, encouraging them to incorporate these values into their lives to keep Gandhiji's legacy alive. He stressed the critical need to initiate a unified movement aimed at preserving Gandhian ideals and called for introspection within Gandhian organizations to ensure these values continue to flourish in society.

Session One : Gandhi, Conflict Resolution and Peace Building

This session underscores the urgent need for fostering a more refined relationship between civilians in the face of increasing assaults on fundamental and human rights. In a world marked by extreme compart-mentalization, driven by the industrialized division of labor, humanity has increasingly lost its sense of purpose and identity. Gandhiji, however, offered a holistic path, one that enables us to experience life in its fullness.

This holistic perspective is rooted in the realization of Truth as God, an eternal and all-encompassing reality. Gandhiji's approach to resolving conflicts through non-violent means—embodied in Satyagraha—serves as a guiding principle even today. In the current scenario, Satyagraha can be adopted by upholding truth, speaking it fearlessly, and standing in solidarity with those who dare to speak the truth, making it a powerful tool for justice and change

Session Two: Gandhi for Sustainable and Equitable Development

The session emphasized that the creation of wealth must be achieved through fair and ethical means, without jeopardizing sustainable development, and that this should form the foundation of economic policy. The philosophy of "simple living and high thinking" was highlighted as a guiding principle for life. Speakers focused on Gandhian ideas, which are spiritually oriented and adopt a holistic perspective on life and society.

A strong call was made to protect the earth, with the reminder that by saving the planet, we ultimately save ourselves. The speakers cautioned against human greed, warning that the relentless exploitation of resources will lead to their depletion. If unchecked, this greed will result in the earth becoming a barren wasteland. The session concluded with an urgent appeal to adopt simpler, environmentally friendly lifestyles to ensure the sustainability of the planet for future generations.

Session Three: Gandhi, Democracy and Dissent

The session emphasized that dissent is an integral part of a democratic system. Gandhiji envisioned a society where citizens actively voiced dissent against tyranny and violence. His concept of democracy was rooted in the vision of a discrimination-free India, anchored in the principles of fearlessness and 'Aparigraha' (non-possession), which led him to develop the concept of 'Satyagraha.'

Speakers expressed concern over the increasing influence of corporate power in politics, warning that it threatens the core values necessary for a functioning democracy. They noted that contemporary politics often seems detached from essential human values, posing significant challenges. The session also explored the need for political reforms, fundamental rights, and for the political system to ensure the building of a value based society.

Session Four: Gandhian Values and the Revolutionary Power of Technology: Is a Synthesis Possible?

The session emphasized the enduring relevance of Gandhiji's principles and values, asserting that they will remain vital as long as humanity exists. A reference to the book 'Music of the Spinning Wheel: Mahatma Gandhi's Manifesto for the Internet Age highlighted the transformative power of modern technologies, dispelling the myth that Gandhi was opposed to scientific progress. In fact, Gandhiji supported the use of small, localized, and village-centric technologies to empower India's villages and make them self-reliant.

The session also acknowledged the contributions of Rajiv Gandhi and his advisor Sam Pitroda, whose efforts laid the foundation for India's telecom revolution, which has since put the telephone into the hands of the masses. The session concluded by positing the internet as an avatar of the spinning wheel, provided the evolution of the Digital Era is guided by mankind's ancient wisdom to minimize its perils and maximize its promises and a call for all of us to become 'Internet Satyagrahis.'

Session Five : Dialogue Among Religions for Peace and Harmony

The session enlightened the audience and students about Gandhiji's principles of Sathya (truth) and Ahimsa (non-violence), emphasizing that morality cannot be practiced without truth. It was highlighted that humanity, morality, and spirituality are fundamental aspects of any religion, and by focusing on spirituality, one can achieve true morality.

The session drew on examples from Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda to illustrate that there is no higher religion than truth and righteousness and that a deep yearning for God is essential. It stressed the urgent need for cultivating friendly relationships and promoting peace. A common threat to all faith groups is the tendency to reduce the freedom of religion to the mere freedom of private worship, and all believers should therefore strengthen

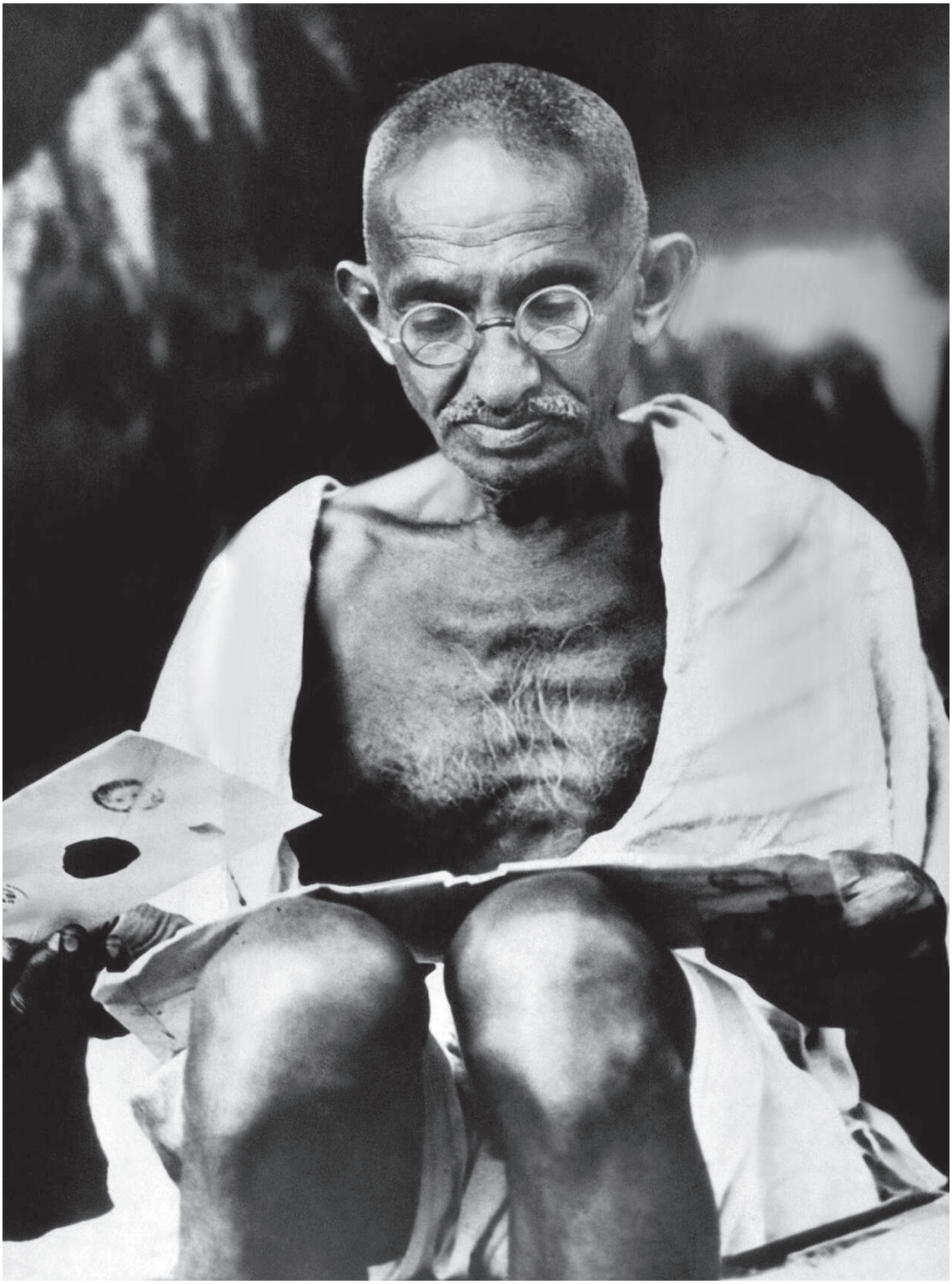
religious freedom by promoting inter-religious dialogue.

The session concluded with a reaffirmation of Gandhiji's vision of Sarvodaya (progress for all) and peace, aiming to address relevant social issues and promote community development. It emphasized the importance of following Gandhiji's ideology of non-violence to restore peace in society and the state.

Session Six : Gandhi, Globalization and Global Governance

The session provided a thought-provoking analysis of globalization, highlighting its impact on the autonomy of nation-states. It discussed how globalization enforces a convergence of national policies, potentially undermining democracy and diminishing the legitimacy of national political systems, thereby altering the nature of sovereignty.

The speakers noted a troubling trend where the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is decreasing, steering India towards a plutocracy. This extreme concentration of income and wealth is expected to exert disproportionate influence on both society and government. Additionally, the session highlighted that globalization tends to favor capital-intensive, labor-saving technologies



Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi
Gandhi Bhavan, Bengaluru

MEMBERS OF KARNATAKA GANDHI SMARAKA NIDHI

Nadoja Wooday P. Krishna
President

N.R. Vishukumar
Working President

Sri M. C. Narendra
Hon' Secretary

Prof. S. G. Siddaramaiah
Vice President

Prof. G. S. Jayadev
Vice President

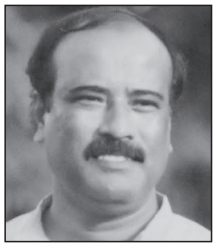
Sri H. B. Dinesh
Hon' Treasurer

Sri Umesh Baligar
Member

Dr. Abida Begum
Member

Prof. Jeevan Kumar
Member

Smt. Savitha Nagabhushan
Member



Dr. Chittaiah Pujar D.K.
Member

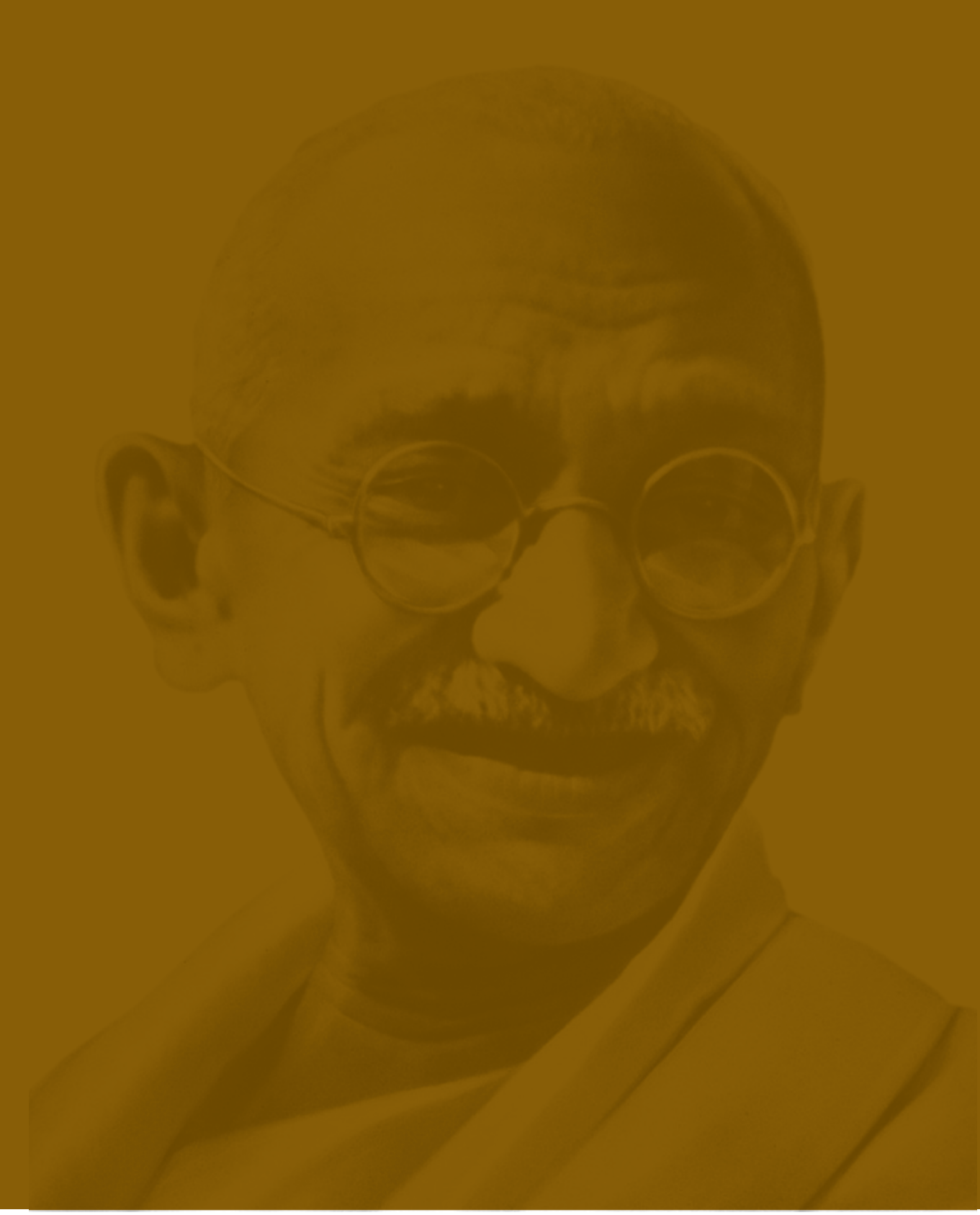
SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE TWO-DAY EVENT HELD ON 24TH AND 25TH AUGUST 2024 ON YOUTUBE.

DAY 1

DAY 2

NOTES

NOTES



Gandhi Bhavan, Kumara Park East, Bangalore - 560 001. Karnataka, INDIA.
Ph : 080 22261967 | **Email :** gandhibhavanabangalore@gmail.com | **Website :** gandhibhavanbangalore.com